

THOMAS PYNCHON AT SIXTY

01770951-946436

news

significant shorts

Pilot killed on photography mission in Scotland

A light aircraft on a photographic assignment crashed into a field yesterday, killing the pilot. The white twin-seater Cessna 152 took off from Cumbernauld airport, 10 miles north of Glasgow, at around 8.30am and was heading for Denny, near Falkirk, when the accident happened. It ploughed into a field yards from the B818 road two miles from Denny about 15 minutes later. Central Scotland Police confirmed that the pilot had died and efforts were being made to identify the pilot.

Pet bakery rouses lethal fears

The RSPCA is warning pet-lovers about the dangers of killing their pets with kindness after the launch of Britain's first dog bakery selling gourmet biscuits and birthday cakes. PetSmart has opened at Europe's largest pet superstore in Raynes Park, London. Those wanting to treat their pets can choose from a pack of eight minipupcakes priced at £3.60 to a two-tiered seven-inch sponge cake decorated with bones and paw prints for £15.98. But an RSPCA spokesman said: "Dogs should not be stuffed with cakes."

1066 and all that goes electronic

The Public Record Office, which houses paperwork dating back to the Domesday Book of 1066, will move into the modern world this week when it goes electronic. But only new documents will be stored on the PRO's new computer system. About 900 years of historical documents will remain tucked away in the estimated 90-miles of shelves within the depths of the PRO at Ruskin Avenue, Richmond, London. When the EROS, Electronic records from Office Systems, becomes available to the public on Friday, the only record on offer via computer will be part of Lord Nolan's report, from the Committee on Standards of Conduct in Public Life.

Essex firefighters strike again

Firefighters were last night launching their seventh strike in a long-running dispute over spending cuts. Around 1,000 members of the Fire Brigades Union in Essex were walking out at 1800 hours for the latest 24-hour strike in protest at £1.5m-worth of cuts.

Conran wins sole rights to Zinc



The right to own a bar called Zinc was won by Sir Terence Conran, the restaurateur, yesterday. Sir Terence beat off rival Vince Power, who owns the Mean Fiddler chain of concert venues.

The design guru had resorted to legal action after claiming Mr Power's new bar, Zn, formerly known as Zincbar, infringed his trade mark Zinc.

The mark was registered to Sir Terence in June 1995. But in December last year, Mr

Power opened a bar in Kilburn High Road, London, called Zincbar.

After protests, the name was changed to the chemical symbol for zinc, which Sir Terence found unsatisfactory. Mr Power's bar will have to change its name. Under the order, he cannot use Zinc, Sync or Zn in addition to Zincbar and Zn.

Raving Monster's mother dies

Annie Sutch, mother of Screaming Lord Sutch the founder of the Monster Raving Loony Party, has died aged 80, her family said. Mrs Sutch, who encouraged her only son to stand for Parliament and helped put together his colourful costumes, died at London's Northwick Park Hospital last week.

Lord Sutch, 56, pulled out of the general election campaign to be at his mother's side after she fell ill. Lord Sutch, whose real name is David, said: "She meant everything to me. I can't believe she has gone."

Police shock over officer's suicide

A promising young police officer, tipped by colleagues to reach the top of his profession, has committed suicide. Fellow officers discovered the body of Detective Chief Inspector David Bass, 33, at his East London home on Sunday evening.

Det Ch Insp Bass, who was based at Limehouse Police Station was due to be promoted to Superintendent, making him one of the youngest in Britain to hold that rank.

A colleague said: "David was a very impressive young man who'd probably have ended up as the youngest chief constable in the country. Everyone is very upset."

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NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up 41.2% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1996

people



Margaret Atwood: Novel tells story of notorious murderer (Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid)

American authors writ large in Orange order of merit

Two of the world's most celebrated female novelists are on the shortlist for the £30,000 Orange Prize for fiction, open only to women writers.

The American E. Annie Proulx, winner of the 1993 Pulitzer Prize, and the Canadian Margaret Atwood, three times shortlisted for the Booker Prize, are among the six writers competing for the prize, set up last year to raise the profile of fiction by female writers.

Mrs Proulx, who published her first novel in 1991 at the age of 56 and won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Shipping News* in 1993, is included for *Accordion Crimes*, a tale of immigrant life in 20th-century America, constructed around the journey of an accordion and those who own it.

Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace* is based on the true story of one of 19th-century Canada's most enigmatic and notorious characters, murderer Grace Marks. It was favourite for last year's Booker Prize, but lost out to Graham Swift's *Last Orders*.

The other novels in the running for the prize, which will be awarded in June, are: *One by One in the Darkness* by Deirdre Madden; *I Was America* by Jane

Mendelsohn; *Fugitive Pieces* by Anne Michaels, and *Hen's Teeth* by Manda Scott. Three of the four are first novels.

In an extension to the usual format of literary awards, the shortlisted authors will read from their books at a public reading, two nights before the prize-giving, and there will be an Orange web site for readers to give their opinions on the books.

A spokeswoman for the prize organisers said last night: "It's true that the prize was set up to raise the profile of women novelists. But it doesn't matter at all if there are high-profile and high-selling authors on the shortlist, as the prize will bring them to the attention of even more readers."

Kate Mosse, administrator of the prize, commented: "Our aim was always to create a prize for readers and bring a breath of fresh air to the established literary landscape. I'm particularly excited at the international flavour of this year's shortlist and I am delighted that we have been able to extend our range of debates and live readings."

David Lister

Hamilton's wife tells of stress caused by defeat

Christine Hamilton (right), wife of former MP Neil Hamilton, yesterday admitted that the stress of his defeat had left her depressed and sleepless, and that she had lost a stone-and-a-half in weight.

The couple both lost their jobs when "anti-sleaze" candidate Martin Bell took Mr Hamilton's Tatten seat in the general election. Mrs Hamilton was her husband's secretary and had worked in Parliament for 27 years.

In a live appearance on BBC1's *Kilroy* discussion programme, 47-year-old Mrs Hamilton said: "Of course, I am depressed but I am also very optimistic. We have just got to pick ourselves up. We are absolutely exhausted."

"It is when you wake up in the middle of the night that it is worst. Nature wakes you in the middle of the night, and then I can't get back to sleep. I have lost a stone-and-a-half over the last six months. We have had a hell of a time for months."

Mr Hamilton, 48, compared the loss of his seat to the death of someone close. "It is akin to a bereavement. I feel as though I have been bereaved in a sense, because my career is something I've wanted to do since the age of 12 or 13."



The Hamiltons said they felt angry rather than ashamed and were looking forward to being exonerated by the publication of the Downey report into sleaze.

The couple won a generally sympathetic hearing from the studio audience. But some suggested that Mr Hamilton would find the experience of claiming benefits under the rules introduced by the old Tory government a rude shock.

One woman told the ax-MP, who said he had not yet signed on: "You haven't been into a JobCentre under the Job Seekers' Allowance? You don't even know you're born yet."

College welcomes graduate, aged 103

A 103-year-old woman is set to become the oldest person to receive a degree certificate from Cambridge University.

Molly Maxwell will collect the award at a special ceremony on her 104th birthday, on Tuesday - 80 years after she finished her studies at Cambridge.

Mrs Maxwell, who now lives in a nursing home in Golders Green, north London, began studying modern languages at Newnham College in 1914.

She completed her studies in 1917 and left with an "honours" certificate - women were not allowed to receive degrees and become members of the university until 1948.

Now the university has said women who completed degree courses prior to 1948 can be given certificates. And Mrs Green has asked if she can be given her just reward at long last.

"She asked the nursing staff to get in touch with us and we were delighted to help," said a Cambridge University spokesman.

"She completed the degree course and the certificate is really just a formality."

"She will certainly be the oldest person to receive a degree certificate from us."

briefing

COUNTRYSIDE

Pesticides decimating farmland bird population

"Not so much a Dawn Chorus, more a barber's shop quartet." The description yesterday by broadcaster and naturalist Julian Pettifer of the death of bird song outside his Berkshire home reinforced the findings of a report linking pesticide use and the decline in numbers of farmland birds.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds wants the new Government to encourage industry to develop pest-specific chemicals and to tax pesticides according to their impact on wildlife.

With insects and seed-bearing weeds killed off, the chicks of several species are being starved to death, suggested the report by two Government advisory bodies, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and English Nature, and the RSPB.

Underlining what many ornithologists have long suspected, the report identified 11 endangered species, including skylark (down 58 per cent in 25 years), lapwing (down 62 per cent) and song thrush (down 73 per cent).

Stephen Goodwin



INTERNET

Royal web site proves popular

The official royal website has been visited 12.5 million times in its first two months on the Internet, Buckingham Palace disclosed yesterday. The 165-page site, launched by the Queen on 6 March, was accessed 1 million times in the first 24 hours.

And now the site has been extended, with a further 85 pages of royal history, profiles and speeches, illustrated by pictures from the Royal Collection. Computer users around the world, who are connected to the Internet, can now access the history of the British crown, for the price of a local telephone call.

National curriculum history advisers have collaborated with the Palace to write the text of the pages, covering the Anglo-Saxon kings to George VI. In addition, users can access a rare letter written by George III in the 1780s on the loss of America, and Edward VIII's abdication speech of December 11, 1936.

The web site address is: <http://www.royal.gov.uk>

NATURE

Prickly outlook for hedgehogs

The perils of life as a hedgehog were highlighted yesterday by a study which showed that up to 75 per cent face an early death - largely because of the hazards of the human environment.

Of 12 released into the wild in Surrey, only three were definitely still alive 15 weeks later, the research found. The animals dispersed widely - over distances up to 3km.

Six died in accidents, including three hit by cars, while one, having done well for 71 days, drowned in a steep-sided garden pond. One became the unlucky victim of a badger.

Dr Nigel Reeve, a lecturer and researcher at Roehampton Institute, London, who carried out the study, wrote in *Nature Line*, the magazine of Surrey Wildlife Trust: "We must be very concerned that a hedgehog's life seems to be so dangerous. Of seven recorded deaths, only one was the result of a failure to thrive and all other mortality was accidental."

TRANSPORT

Women afraid to travel by train

Women should be free from fear when travelling by train and more should be done to make journeys safer for them, according to a report published yesterday. Women wanted to know that help was at hand from well-trained and visible staff, the report added.

Poor carriage layout, doors and windows not opening, and badly designed overhead racks were just some of the problems cited.

The report - by the south-east England section of the working women's group Soroptimist International - calls for measures to make the communication cord easier to reach on certain trains, emergency help points on every station, better public information and better carriage design.

TECHNOLOGY

Microchip giant moves forward

The giant microchip manufacturer Intel has launched its next generation computer processor, the Pentium II. The new chip has been designed to make best use of "visual computing", a step forward in business computer use which Intel expects to be widely used in the next few years.

Graphics and pictures are expected to become more important in the way people present information, with 3-D graphs replacing spreadsheets full of numbers. As systems become more visual and reliant on graphics, existing computers will work slower because they cannot cope with the graphical content.

Intel claims its new microchip anticipates these changes. It will be installed on new computers as from now, and although it will add to their cost, one company executive said the extra money was an "investment".

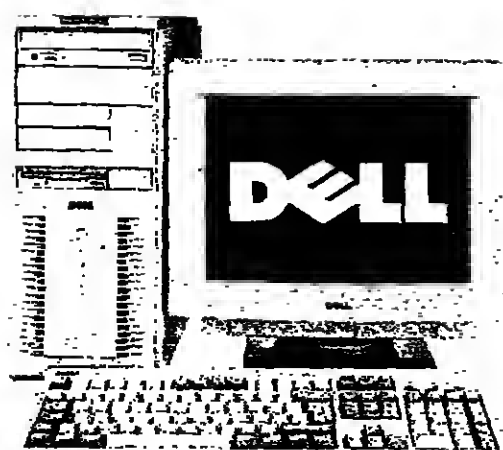
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BBC Too masculine **BBC** Too middle-class **BBC** Too middle-aged

What Channel 4's new chief executive had to say about his former bosses

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

The BBC was accused of talking in a voice that is too middle-aged, too masculine and too southern yesterday by the man who was running its television channels until last Friday.

Michael Jackson, the new chief executive of Channel 4 and former director of television and controller of BBC 1, made the comments as Channel 4 was showing him off to the press at its London headquarters.

Mr Jackson, who will take over from Michael Grade on 1 June, told journalists: "One of the areas that BBC TV is weak in is talking to women as opposed to men, talking to young people and talking to people outside the South-east of England."

He contrasted this with what he thought were Channel 4's strengths: "They're in to do with the relationship with an audience that trusts Channel 4 which knows that the channel is on its side."

A BBC spokesman later said that he was puzzled by Mr Jackson's comments.

He added: "BBC 1 has the most balanced audience of any British broadcaster. BBC2, having trounced Channel 4 over the last three years is now seeking to reinforce its strengths by appealing more to women and young people."

But the lobbying group Women in Film and Television welcomed Mr Jackson's comments. "We're delighted that at his maiden press conference he has recognised the importance of a commitment to women as an audience and we look forward to an increased profile for women on all channels," a spokeswoman said.

"It is not that there are never any programmes about women or about life north of Watford," said Tessa Perkins, principal lecturer in media at Sheffield Hallam University. "It is the fact that the way they are dealt with is as if they are a departure from the normal, male, southern world."

She added: "Channel 4 targets niche audiences directly, it is part of its remit. The BBC thinks of niche audiences not in terms of women, youth or regions, but in terms of the *Clothes Show*, the *Food and Drink Programme* or *Gardener's World*. Minorities are more like hobbyists."

Stephen Barnett, senior lecturer in communications at the University of Westminster, said that the BBC has its own research which confirms Mr Jackson's comments.

"It is perceived by the young as too middle-aged and by those in the regions as too London biased. Although I would argue that few see it as too male," Mr Barnett said. "The BBC has been aware of this for some time. And it is trying to change."



Sylvia Peters and her Baby

See page 12

Two ages of BBC women: The fifties presenter, Sylvia Peters, and Jill Dando, who is among the most widely favoured female broadcasters today

Man who has date with destiny

Rob Brown
Media Editor

When the founding chief executive of Channel 4, Jeremy Isaacs, handed over control of the station to Michael Grade, he issued this stern warning to the cigar-chomping impresario: "I am handing on to you a sacred trust. If you screw it up, if you betray it, I'll come back and throttle you."

As far as we know, Michael Grade has not been moved to issue a similar threat to Michael Jackson as he prepares to succeed him in what he and many others many others regard as the best job in British broadcasting.

Mr Jackson has seemed almost pre-destined for this position since he penned a thesis on the need for a radical innovative minority network as part of his BA in Media Studies at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the

University of Westminster). He was organiser of the Channel 4 Group which successfully lobbied for independent producers to play a key role in getting the station up and running.

Still only 39, Mr Jackson certainly gave the impression that his date with destiny had arrived yesterday when he was paraded before the press at Channel 4's headquarters near Victoria station, in central London.

"I have a huge attachment to Channel 4, I lobbied for it in its early days and I've watched it grow in strength and professionalism over the years," he confidently asserted, adding that his chief challenge would be to lead the station into the digital age and refresh and reinvigorate its programming remit.

Would that involve ditching programmes like *The Girlie Show*, which Mr Jackson, in his days in

charge of BBC2, once denounced as "sapping of originality" and "putting packaging before programming?"

Predictably, the new boss refused to discuss the merits or demerits of individual programmes before meeting the station's commissioning editors. "But my comments on *The Girlie Show* are a matter of public record," he added rather ominously.

He was also ultra-careful too asked about the future of its director of programming John Willis, whom he pipped for the chief executive post and with whom he once traded insults. Mr Willis handed him a "copycat criminal" after he had described Channel 4 as the "larger channel" because of its obsessive desire to appeal to upwardly mobile young males. But all is fair in love and ratings wars, apparently. "I have a great respect for John," enthused Mr Jackson.



Michael Jackson: Wrote his thesis on radical innovation

The virtual pet that provides companionship at a stroke

Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

It is a pet which needs tender-loving care, constant feeding and strong discipline but it can fit in your pocket and doesn't need taking for walks.

This week sees the inevitable conclusion to our fast-moving, convenience-obsessed world. The cyberpet - a pocket-size chick which has taken Japan by

storm - will be launched tonight, and be available in the shops from next Monday.

Nearly 4 million "Tamagotchi", or "loveable eggs", have been sold in Japan to date and the manufacturer, Bandai, plans to sell 13 million over the next year.

The toy looks like an egg-shaped key ring but has a virtual reality chicken, represented as an animated line drawing on

a small LCD screen. It may be a virtual pet, but its makers say the creature requires as much attention from its owner as the average cat or dog.

Invented last year by a Japanese housewife, Aki Maeda, it imposes a hard regime on its owner, demanding to be virtually fed, virtually exercised and virtually amused by emitting a variety of electronic sounds. It even requires cleaning up after vir-

tually relieving itself. The creature begins life as a Bebitchi ("Babey"); the aim is to keep it alive for as long as possible, watching it grow through various stages of life right to maturity as an Oyafitchi ("Grampy"). A Tamagotchi lives for between 10 and 30 days. When its time is up the chicken icon transforms itself into an angel.

The toy - full name "Hyper Interactive Digital Pet Tam-

agotchi" - squeaks with delight when fed by the press of a button, or when its owner plays peek-a-boo with it. But it also warns the owner when it has defecated and when it is naughty another button can be used to provide discipline.

Although the toy was initially marketed at schoolgirls and working women, Japanese businessmen have been seen caring for their pets on the subway.

Bandai say that Tamagotchi crèches have been set up in Tokyo to let high-flyers leave their pets under supervision and hereafterment counsellors are even being asked to help people through the unexpected passing of their pet.

Two books of advice on caring for the tamagotchi have already been published and the demand is creating a new breed of Tamagotchi criminals. The

pet will retail for £10.99 here - but in Japan Tamagotchis are selling for up to 10 times their value on the black market.

So seriously are cyberpets taken in Japan that in Tokyo earlier this year a helicopter, several patrol cars and a dozen police officers were involved in the pursuit of members of a gang who had made off with a Tamagotchi. The four thieves turned out to be 14 years-old.



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news

Wreck may be world's oldest ship

Divers in Hampshire believe they may have found the oldest ship in the world. Carbon dating shows that wood found on the sea bed off Hayling Island, is 6,431 years old.

If, as divers who made the discovery hope, the wood turns out to come from a ship, it means they have found one of the oldest wrecks known – pre-dating the Pyramids and Stonehenge.

The wood has been discovered by members of the original diving team who located the Tudor warship *Mary Rose* which was lifted from the Solent off Southsea, also in Hampshire.

The team members have stuck together and, while investigating a Roman causeway in 1992, a short distance along the coast at Hayling, they found the pieces of wood, which they hoped might come from a Roman ship.

Initial analysis showed the wood was older than the 15th century and came from either a very cold or very hot climate, but only recently has carbon dating on the wood been carried out.

"The mind-boggling thing is it is not 2,000 years old as we were hoping, it turns out to be 6,431 years old," said a member of the team, Don Bullivant, 64, yesterday.

"We don't really know what we have got. It could be a clump of trees, which we think is un-

likely, or it could be a building or it could be a ship. We are hoping very much for it to be a ship."

Electronic soundings of the site – it is about a mile off Hayling Island and its exact location is being kept secret – show what could be the shape of a vessel, although they could be misleading said Mr Bullivant.

"Hopefully it is a ship. If it is, we have the oldest ship in the world. The earliest recorded at the moment is 4,000 years old," he said. Six thousand years ago, he said, the Solent was a river, and the team has asked experts on the period for their help in identifying the wood.

Meanwhile they intend to return and carry out a further survey of the site, about 20 feet below the surface, and plan to get a second opinion on the age of the wood.

It is not clear as to whether the site would have been dry land or shallow water at the time, and the likelihood of a 100ft long vessel existing in northern Europe at that period is extremely remote.

The oldest boat yet found anywhere in the world – a large dugout canoe – was made 8,000 years ago in what is now the Netherlands, but it is known that humans were carrying out ocean voyages of 200 miles 25,000 years ago, and 50 mile sea journeys as long as 60,000 years ago.



London witnessed its first May snow shower for nearly 20 years yesterday as the country slipped back into winter's icy grip.

Snow flurries dusted the capital, which spent much of late April basking in sunshine and temperatures in the 70s, and the London Weather Centre

reported a sleet shower on its roof. The snow was the first in May since 1979.

Many other parts of Britain were plunged back into wintry conditions, and many roads, like the one shown above in Co Durham, were covered by snow. Although it was quick to melt, heavy falls of snow blocked roads in

the Scottish Highlands and North Wales as temperatures dropped to around 7C below the May-time average.

Half an inch of rain fell over Norwich and London – the biggest down-pour since February and more than fell in the capital during the whole of

March and April. Forecasters warn of frost in many areas tonight more cold weather to come – which will worry farmers and gardeners.

The AA warned drivers to keep their speed down and keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front.

Photograph: PA

Bid to swim for help cost boy his life

Michael Streeter

Relatives of schoolboy Christopher Scott said yesterday they believed the 11-year-old died trying to swim for help for his two non-swimming friends when they became trapped on treacherous mudflats.

As the search for Nathan Sawyer and Ian Smye, who are still missing, was called off a second time as night fell yesterday, more details emerged about

their tragic outing. The trio had set out for a Sunday hike ride on the bleak Lincolnshire coastline of the Humber Estuary.

The area, south-east of Grimsby, is criss-crossed by gullies which can be swiftly filled by the incoming tide and it is feared that the boys became trapped and then swept away.

Hopes have virtually disappeared that Nathan, aged nine, and Ian, who would have been 10 yesterday, will be found alive.

The alarm was raised by their parents when they failed to return home, but it was not until the next day that the body of Christopher was spotted by a rescue helicopter crew.

A post-mortem examination was being carried out yesterday; police say they believe he drowned.

Valerie Scott, Christopher's grandmother, Valerie, said she thought that Christopher had died trying to save his friends.

"I believe that the other two could not swim and Christopher could. We think he tried to come back and get help. He would have tried to save his friends because he was like that and they were all very close."

She said the boys knew that the mudflats were dangerous, but added: "They were aware but I don't think they really understood what danger is. This is just a terrible thing to happen."

Prayers were said at a special

assembly yesterday at the boys' school in their home village of North Coates.

A police underwater search team joined the hunt yesterday and will be involved again today when the search resumes. An RAF helicopter and specially trained dogs will also be used.

Coastguard John Harrison admitted that hopes of finding the boys alive had passed.

"After this length of time it is highly unlikely," he said.

Accused care worker 'doing a good job'

Louise Jury

A care supervisor accused of ill-treating mentally disabled residents always seemed to get on well with them, a colleague told a court yesterday. Judith Smelt, formerly the office administrator, said Lorraine Field "had a good rapport with [the residents] and they all seemed to be very fond of her".

Mrs Field, 42, of Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, has denied four counts of ill-treating residents at two residential homes formerly run by a company called Longcare in the town.

Another former member of staff, Desmond Tully, 33, of Exeter, Devon, also denies four charges of ill-treating residents. And former company director Angela Rowe, 39, of Windsor, Berkshire, denies two counts of ill-treating and two of wilfully neglecting residents in her care.

Kingston Crown Court also heard testimony from current colleagues of Mr Tully that he has "done a good job" at a home he now runs in Devon.

But in his closing speech for the prosecution, Jonathan Caplan QC, said the jury must assess the "compelling" evidence against all three defendants.

"This case is not about best practice, how best to run residential care homes for the mentally disabled. It's a case about falling below what is acceptable in running such homes and falling into the realms of the criminal law," he said.

He added that caring for the mentally disabled could be "demanding, frustrating, possibly risky, but that does not give anybody who has such a person in their care a license to ill-treat that person or to neglect their welfare".

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blair's britain



Cabinet potential: Pupils from Broadhurst School in Hampstead, north London outside No 10 Downing Street yesterday during a visit

Photograph: Rebecca Nader/PA

Commons freshers shown the ropes

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

By the end of the week they will have been inducted, tagged, administered, sworn in, lectured to and accommodated. They will be given a handbook, a video, a car park pass and endless cups of tea.

Some of the new boys and girls in the House of Commons say it feels just like the first day at school. Others, feeling

more grown up, compare the experience to freshers' week at university. After two years "in the sixth form" as a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate and six weeks' heavy preparation for the final exams on election day, they have finally arrived.

Some were always confident that they would make it to Parliament, but many believed just five days ago that they would be returning to normal life by now. Instead they have been thrown

into a euphoric round of introductions and practicalities. There are 262 new members - more than at any time in living memory. Among them are 190 Labour members, 42 Conservative, 29 Liberal Democrat and one - Martin Bell - independent. Mr Bell, like the other opposition MPs, is being herded around by the opposition whips, Labour MPs by the government ones.

For the first time, the

Sergeant at Arms' office has set up an exhibition for the new members and is providing back-up material to help them find their feet. Before they can settle down to work they must get security passes, offices, secretaries and researchers.

Yesterday, about 50 new Labour members from across the South and Midlands gathered in a conference room to be told the ropes. Among them was Helen Brinton, a teacher, who won

Peterborough from the Tories. "We know all there is to know about being candidates, but we don't know about being MPs," she said.

Post-election camaraderie has broken out across party lines among the new members, and Mrs Brinton has even found herself a "pair" in the accommodation queue - a Tory with whom she will agree nights off.

With a Labour majority of 179, many on her side of the house

will not be so lucky. Chris Pond, former director of the Low Pay Unit and new Labour member for Gravesend, says the induction process feels "like being back in short trousers," but is delightedly organising a Kent Labour MPs' group - not possible with the previous total of two but now plausible with eight.

Among his new Kent colleagues are Paul Clark, new Labour member for Gillingham, and Derek Wyatt, member for

Sittingbourne. Mr Clark, a TUC training centre manager, and Mr Wyatt, director of the computer channel on Sky Television, might both reasonably have expected to go back to their old jobs this week. But both say they knew they could win.

Most of these new members are already relishing the job ahead, and while a few admit to feeling a little caught up in the confusion of these first days, others are churlish.

Fiona MacTaggart, new MP for Slough and former chair of Liberty and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, already has her Parliamentary interests mapped out.

"I have spent quite a lot of time in this building. I have actually, in a former job, got a House of Commons' select committee to change government policy. But even if I hadn't done it before I would never be intimidated," she said.

Foster quits over Cabinet post snub

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Tony Blair suffered his first ministerial resignation yesterday, just four days after coming into office.

Derek Foster, a former Labour chief whip and Shadow Cabinet member, was clearly angry that he had not been offered the Cabinet post he said he had been promised. He decided to stand down despite having accepted a job as Minister of State at the Office of Public Service, and it is understood he may now stand for election as Deputy Speaker.

"On reflection, after Saturday's appointments, I felt I might have more to offer in other ways and I will have an announcement to make in due course. I am perfectly happy with the outcome," he said.

Peter Kilfoyle, an education spokesman in Opposition, becomes Public Services Minister, but he takes on simply a junior ministerial rank.

Mr Foster, an elected chief whip, was one of many senior Labour figures who were bitterly disappointed at being offered jobs less senior to the ones that they shadowed in opposition.

Andrew Smith, the shadow transport secretary and Michael Meacher, shadow minister for environmental protection, were



Derek Foster: May seek election as Deputy Speaker

also in the Shadow Cabinet but not in the Cabinet. Further down the ranks, a large number of junior shadow ministers are jobless or have more junior positions. Of 76 people who held Shadow Cabinet or ministerial positions, 17 have been demoted or sacked.

Both Janet Anderson, who was formerly shadow minister for women, and Graham Allen, a former spokesman on constitutional and environment matters, will go to the whip's office. For the rest, the only posts left are in the whip's office or at PPS level, the very bottom rung of the ministerial ladder.

Among those who were still

left without posts last night were Keith Vaz, former shadow minister for planning, Tom Pendry, former shadow minister for sport, and Lewis Moonie, another shadow minister at National Heritage.

Although Mr Blair has put a large number of women in his ministerial teams, several have been left out. Among them are Joan Ruddock, former shadow for environmental protection, Lin Golding, former shadow for food safety and agriculture and Ann Coffey, former shadow health minister.

However, there were jobs yesterday for Mark Fisher at heritage, Alf Dubbs, now Lord Dubbs, at Northern Ireland and for Andrew Hardie, QC, as Lord Advocate and life peer.

Some of the disappointed ones claimed yesterday that the system was unfair.

People who had previously worked for "big hitters" such as Gordon Brown or John Prescott could expect their former bosses to fight their corners for them, they said.

"It seems all this is done in a very random way. There's no assessment, there's no merit involved, it's who you know and if someone liked your face."

"No one actually sits down and says this is what we think about your performance," one of them said.

Jowell to be Britain's first guardian of public health

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

There will be no separate minister for women in the Labour government, it was confirmed yesterday, but Tony Blair has broken new ground by appointing Britain's first minister for public health.

The Prime Minister has kept his promise to make the role of minister for women a cabinet post by giving the responsibility to Harriet Harman, the Social Security Secretary, despite the fact that her job also requires her to control the biggest budget of any Whitehall department.

Tessa Jowell, Minister of State at the Department of

Health, was yesterday given responsibility for public health, the first time the specialty has been recognised at ministerial level. One of her first tasks will be to implement a ban on tobacco advertising, to which Labour is pledged.

Labour promised last year that there would be a minister for women within the Cabinet, possibly with the title of Minister of the Duchy of Lancaster. She would be backed by a team of civil servants in the Cabinet Office, according to its policy document, "Governing for Equality".

Under the Conservatives, women's affairs were based at the Department of Education and Employment under Gillian Shephard, who delegated day-to-day responsibility to her junior minister, Cheryl Gillan. She had six senior civil servants working under her.

Under Labour, women's issues will be the preserve of the Department of Social Security. It is not yet clear what will happen to the civil servants in the sex and equality division, but there are some indications that their team will be split between the two departments.

Four could remain in the education and employment department working on legislation and on Equal Opportunities Commission issues, while the other two might go to social security to deal with international women's affairs, "main-

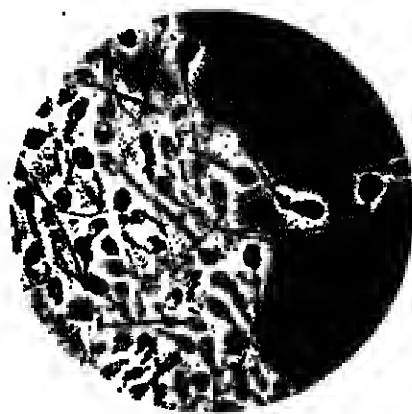
streaming", and the Women's National Commission.

Last night, a spokeswoman for the Pavecc Society, which lobbies for a stronger role for women in public life, said that while it was pleased women had a voice in the Cabinet it was also worried about how Ms Harman could do the job properly. "We are concerned that there is no other minister outside the Cabinet to take that responsibility. We need someone pushing very hard from outside and giving Harriet the information she needs," she said.

A spokesman for Ms Harman said she had always had a strong focus on women's issues and would relish the new opportunity. "Her view is that it is a brilliant opportunity for her to pick up a range of issues. These are central to her agenda, and having the responsibility at Cabinet level is something she is very keen on," he said.

Labour has 18 women ministers including five in the cabinet, while the Tories had 10 including two in the Cabinet.

Commenting on Ms Jowell's appointment, Donald Reid, chief executive of the Association for Public Health, said he was delighted that for the first time Britain had a minister for public health. "But better public health depends on more than one minister. It will depend on all the policies which affect health including those on poverty and the environment."



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Fun-seeking Redwood goes in quest of converts



A lighter shade of blue: John Redwood preaching the merits of his 'broad church' campaign for the Tory leadership yesterday.

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

John Redwood yesterday launched his campaign for the Tory party leadership committed to recreating a "broad church" which was "fun".

"I have to show they can win again and it is fun," he said. "One of the depressing things over the last five years is that we have not had enough fun in Conservative politics. We have to rekindle a sense of fun."

Mr Redwood, seen by many as a rather austere intellectual, may be regarded as the most unlikely "fun" candidate in the leadership campaign. But the extent of the Tory defeat, leaving the Tories with only 165 MPs to choose the new leader, has left Mr Redwood with little option but to widen his appeal from the Thatcherite right wing of the party.

He set out his new strategy by positioning himself more to the centre-right of his party, with a commitment to match Tony Blair's success in reviving his party's fortunes by consulting the grass roots. He also gave a pledge to listen more to the soundings from the 1922 Committee, which was decimated at the election.

Although he fought the general election on a personal pledge to reject the single European currency, Mr Redwood surprised a press conference at the Goring Hotel, near Westminster, by saying there was a lot he and the former Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke could agree on.

Rejecting a single-issue campaign, Mr Redwood said: "I don't want a factional party, obsessed by one issue."

"I do want a broad appeal. I believe that the Conservative Party is a broad church. It must stay as a broad church. The great problem is we don't have enough worshippers at the moment. We have to find more worshippers. You don't do that on one issue or one theme."

He carefully avoided the mis-

take made in his 1995 challenge to John Major for the leadership of being surrounded by the "whiplash" Euro-sceptics - including the now deposed Tony Marlow in his striped blazer and Teresa Gorman - although the Euro-sceptics, John Widdows and David Widdows, were there. He will not get the backing of any former Cabinet ministers, and the test will be the number and quality of middle-ranking ex-ministers who come out in his support.

He had to settle for senior backbenchers, Andrew Hunter, the former chairman of the Tory backbench Northern Ireland committee, and Maria Roe, former minister and past chairman of the Commons select committee on health.

Promising to reveal more support later, Mr Redwood said: "We will be doing the dance of the seven veils. It is so much more exciting that way."

The National Health Service and improvements in education are high on Mr Redwood's campaign agenda. But he also sought to focus the Tories in Opposition to attack the Government over Europe, insisting Robin Cook should have reached a deal to protect the jobs of British fishermen before moving to sign the European social chapter.

The campaign is also likely to hear much of the Tory success in Wokingham in taking 19 council seats out of 26 while the Tory party was facing "carnage" across the rest of the country. Mr Redwood said it showed that with good local organisation the Tories could remain popular with the voters.

He admitted the party has a tall task in reducing the average age of its members from over 60 years.

He wants to revive the grass roots, but he is against constitutional reform in the party, which he said would risk plunging the Conservatives into a rancorous internal dispute of the sort that kept Labour in opposition throughout the 1980s.

EU rewards Britain with opt-out deal

Sarah Helm
Brussels

Britain was yesterday rewarded for pledging to sign the European social chapter with the offer of a generous "opt out" from new open-frontier laws, paving the way to a possible deal on the next European treaty.

The Government's pledge on Monday to accept social legislation spurred Britain's partners into publishing a draft text on pooling justice and immigration powers which the Government can probably accept.

Although it has long seemed likely that Britain would be allowed to keep its internal frontier controls for other European Union nationals - while all other member states lift theirs - the text published yesterday contains the first firm proposal on how this would work.

Current power-sharing in areas of immigration control and home affairs, carried out by some EU countries under the so-called Schengen agreement, is now to be incorporated into the EU machinery. However, the text recognises that Britain and Northern Ireland, "because of their specificities" cannot be bound by the arrangements.

The "specificities" referred to constitutes the first clear recognition by other EU states that Britain's island status, and tra-

ditional reliance on border checks for immigration and crime control, does make it a special case in this policy area.

The "opt-out" offer is therefore not made reluctantly, as the social chapter opt out was in the Maastricht Treaty. Rather, it is a recognition on the EU's part of the need for sensible flexibility, and could signal a turning point in the way negotiations on integration are conducted in future. Furthermore, the "opt-out" offer is far more generous than had been expected while the Conservative government was in power.

Britain is, effectively, to be allowed to pick and choose, which areas of home affairs and immigration power-sharing it wants to be a part of. There are aspects of the new arrangements which Britain wants to share in, namely police co-operation and tougher anti-asylum checks at external borders.

Britain "may, at any time, accept some or all of the provisions ..." says the draft protocol.

Despite the clear attractions of the new offer, prepared by the Dutch government, which currently holds the EU presidency, British officials warned against talks of an early agreement in this area. The officials clearly believe Britain can still squeeze a better deal before the Amsterdam summit in just six weeks time.

DAILY POEM

Kansas City

By Linda France

On a quiet one off the main drag,
it's dark outside the rinky-dink De Luxe -
a wired indigo of twinklers, shadows

that might be driftsmoke if only
Old Fireball was cutting some rug.
The slammer is shut like a kisser

that doesn't dig liquor any day
of the week. It's fish-black unlucky,
hawk's out with his axe; but we know

when we fall in there'll be scumpeen fish
to blow our lids, glittering scales and hot pepper,
some solid juice to wash it down.

We've been saving our rocks all week.
Let's hit that belly-chord. Shake out your vine
and shimmy like a foxy fish.

This poem appears in *Storyville*, Linda France's third collection, which is published tomorrow by Bloodaxe Books (£6.95). The volume's title sequence, from which "Kansas City"

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Tony Banks, the man the PM failed to gag, on the joys and otherwise of his first day at work

Minister for Sport finds his office: 'It's like a cell'

Kathy Marks

The chauffeur-driven limousine drew up outside the colonnaded entrance to the Department of National Heritage. The back door opened, and a jaunty figure in jeans and Doc Martens jumped out. The new Minister for Sport had arrived for his first day at work.

Tony Banks was an hour late, having dropped in at Upton Park, West Ham's football ground, for a photocall. The delay gave his civil servants the jitters, given his admission in a radio interview earlier in the day that he had no idea where his new office was located.

For Mr Banks, a maverick left-winger, the job offer was a bolt from the blue. But the job itself could not have better suited the MP for Newham North East, a fanatical Chelsea supporter. "It's like going to heaven without dying," he said.

The Department of National Her-

itage was not quite sure what had hit it yesterday. Officials were waiting all morning to escort their new minister to meetings with Chris Smith, the Secretary of State. But when Mr Banks finally turned up at 2pm, he brushed them aside. Flouting the edict by Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's press secretary, that interviews with ministers must be approved by him, he took off to the nearby Sports Café for an impromptu press conference.

Perched at a table, swigging on a bottle of Rolling Rock beer, he pronounced on life, politics and football. Wembley Stadium was "crap", he declared. Despite his elevated station, Mr Banks has no plans to tone himself down. "I've not been made Foreign Secretary, where diplomatic language is essential," he said. "I shall be using the language of sport, which does get colourful from time to time."

The men from the ministry were

getting restless. It was time for Mr Banks to get acquainted with his workplace. He entered the building. "Posh, innit?" he observed, looking round at the mirrored foyer with its pot plants and waterfalls.

By the time he reached his office, a spartan room with net curtains, he had recovered his sang-froid. "God, this is a bit rudimentary, isn't it? It's like a prison cell. I don't think much of the trappings of office so far." Glancing down, he added: "Nothing in the out tray, nothing in the urgent tray, nothing in the pending tray, just the way it should be."

Mr Banks's new job will present him with some difficult conundrums. What if a Council of Ministers meeting should fall on 17 May, when Chelsea meets Middlesbrough in the FA Cup Final? "You must be joking. Nothing would stop me going to the Cup Final unless I was dead. And if I was dead I'd want my ashes taken there."



Delayed kick-off: Tony Banks, the new Minister for Sport, relaxing with a beer before taking up office Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Clamp on briefings could backfire

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Attempts to impose a rigid discipline on government announcements and policy initiatives could rebound and lead to an increase in leaks, according to senior civil servants.

Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's press secretary, is seeking to ensure that all major announcements of government policy and even interviews with ministers are co-ordinated through his office. Ministers are also supposed to notify Downing Street if they go to lunches with journalists or meet them informally for off-the-record briefings.

Both current and former civil servants reacted with a "see-it-all-before" attitude, saying that this type of strong central control has been attempted in the past but proved unworkable.

Indeed, they point to similar injunctions from Bernard Ingham, Margaret Thatcher's press secretary, who also wanted similar co-ordination of the government's publicity machine. A press officer in a major department during the 1980s said: "Ingham tried to exert control and issued instructions, but within a few days we started ignoring it because people outside No 10 would sneer at it."

There were typical Civil Service ways of ignoring the instruction, he said: "We would simply carry on turning a blind eye and if No 10 questioned it, we would just say: 'Oh, sorry, didn't we tell you?'"

However, unlike Mr Ingham, Mr Campbell is not a civil servant but a "special adviser", an overtly political appointment,

which civil servants feel is a better arrangement.

There is fierce departmental loyalty from both civil servants and ministers who will resist too much pressure from the centre.

It is not only the independence of the government departments which will prevent Mr Campbell from achieving his sought-after hegemony, but the sheer volume of government work. A senior Labour source said: "It's not like being in opposition when you are not actually making any decisions that affect anybody. It's the whole government machine."

An average department such as transport or environment might put out up to 600 press releases and even if the Government sensibly reduced this number by half, the sheer volume would be impossible to control.

A head of information explained: "The previous government tried to co-ordinate announcements through Michael Heseltine's committee, EDCP. But they would do stupid things like decide the day something should be announced without anyone from the relevant department being consulted and they would find that the minister was abroad, or that an outside group involved in the launch would not be available."

He added: "The real problem is that if you delay an announcement to, as they put it, co-ordinate the government message, it risks leaking out in a completely unplanned way."

You can't sit on things because it will be in someone's interest to leak it."

Brown stands firm over VAT

Sarah Helm
Brussels

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, yesterday reaffirmed his commitment to cut VAT on heating fuel, despite warnings from Brussels that the move could breach the spirit of European common tax rules.

However, Mr Brown and the European Commission seemed determined to avoid a direct clash over the issue for as long as possible.

Mr Brown has made clear that the Government's legal advice states that the move is in no way illegal under EU law. To abandon a manifesto pledge so soon after the election would clearly be unthinkable for the Government. For its part, the European Commission contends that the move is not "illegal" as such, but simply contrary to the objectives of tax harmonisation directives.

There is clearly little desire on the Commission's part to crack the whip at a time when hopes of consensus on a range of other key issues are higher than they have been for many years. Nevertheless, the conflict

over the VAT move is unlikely to disappear. Behind the immediate disagreement lies the broader, highly contentious, question of how far member states should be expected to develop common tax levels.

The Commission's long-standing efforts to harmonise VAT levels have been largely ineffective. A minimum of 15 per cent has been set for most products, but how binding this figure is remains open to interpretation. Britain wants to reduce VAT on domestic fuel from 8 to 5 per cent.

The European Commission, along with member states, is pressing for more harmonisation in tax levels. Efforts have so far concentrated on indirect taxes, such as VAT, but harmonisation of certain direct taxes is also planned. Pressure for greater co-ordination has increased in the run-up to economic and monetary union.

If the Commission decides to get tough, it could take the Government to the European Court of Justice. And if other member states thought Britain was being let off the hook, they could go to the court.



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New ministers keep their promises

NAZI GOLD

Louise Jury

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, yesterday announced that Britain was ready to host an international conference on Nazi gold.

In one of his first steps in his new post, he acted quickly to fulfil a pledge made to Jewish organisations who have lobbied for joint international action to settle the affair.

He also strongly hinted that the remaining war-time gold, due to be returned to governments whose reserves were looted by the Nazis, could go instead to victims of the Holocaust.

The pool was likely to have included personal gold from Jewish victims of Nazism, such as that found in the teeth of concentration camp victims, a new report from the Foreign Office admitted yesterday.

Jewish organisations have long claimed that the Allies failed to distinguish between personal gold, where efforts should have been made to return it to individuals, and that which belonged to governments.

They hailed yesterday's report as further proof that the £46m of gold still held in the Bank of England and in the American Federal Reserve should go to make amends for that failure.

Mr Cook made clear his intention to resolve quickly the question of the remaining gold, which has been held under the Tripartite Gold Commission of America, France and Britain

since the end of the war. He said there had rightly been international concern about the fate of the gold looted by the Nazis, and that "One of the responsibilities of those living now is to ensure that the truth is known about that dark period in Europe's past."

Unveiling the Foreign Office report into what happened to gold found in the British sections of Germany, he said it was clear that some gold taken from individual victims of Nazism may have found its way into the pool.

"This strengthens the case for looking imaginatively for ways of compensating the victims or their direct descendants."

A spokeswoman for the Holocaust Educational Trust said it welcomed the report. "It says there were errors made and that it was understandable. We've never said anything other than that. We now need to look at ways to correct it."

It was widely known that the Germans had melted down gold looted from individuals, but the report shows this was effectively ignored for practical reasons. However, the Bank of England has advised the Foreign Office that it would have been possible to detect large amounts of dental gold if tests had been carried out.

The report highlights the problems, faced by officials working in Germany, caused by inadequate definitions of what was monetary gold - broadly bars and coins - and non-monetary gold - that taken from victims.



Back to work (from top left, clockwise): Robin Cook, David Blunkett, Jack Cunningham and Jack Straw

Photomontage: Jonathan Anstee

FOOD FIT TO EAT

Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs
Correspondent

An independent food standards agency will be the first priority for a reorganised and renamed Ministry of Agriculture, its new head Dr Jack Cunningham pledged yesterday.

He added that the Government would also seek a "positive and constructive" dialogue with the EU over the ban on British beef exports.

Dr Cunningham's vision for the ministry was one that was "more open" and with more consumer voices, he said. He was due to meet Professor Philip James of Aberdeen University last night to discuss the report on food safety commissioned earlier by Tony Blair.

A period of consultation would then be followed by legislation "as soon as the business timetable allows", but Dr Cunningham refused to speculate on how long this would take.

MAFF would also be reorganised as people likely to be involved in the food agency move over there. Dr Cunningham revealed that the ministry would be renamed but said the new name had not been finalised.

He also promised that reports on food safety would be made available to the public. "I have already given instructions to my department that any issue concerning public health and well-being must be brought forward immediately."

On BSE, he said that he would not flinch from tough decisions to be made over the world-wide ban on British beef. He said he planned to go to Brussels on Monday for introductory meetings with the EU Farm Commissioner, Franz Fischer, and the Fisheries Commissioner, Emma Bonino.

He said he would not put specific proposals to the commissioners on Monday, but pledged the Blair government would make a "fresh start" on tackling the BSE crisis.

He added: "In general, I think the Labour government has a better chance of doing constructive business with the EU, full stop, whatever the issue, simply because we shall be more positive about the EU."

NURSERY VOUCHERS

Judith Judd
Education Editor

Education ministers began work yesterday on plans to dismantle the Conservatives' nursery voucher scheme as soon as possible. They are studying options for switching money from the scheme, which gives the parents of all four-year-olds £1100 worth of vouchers a year, back to the local authorities.

Work will start shortly on developing partnerships between local authorities, private nurseries and voluntary groups to run childcare and nursery education. Legislation to end the scheme is unnecessary, but there will be a Bill to end the assisted places scheme.

Money from the scheme will be used

to reduce class sizes for five- to seven-year-olds. Talks with local authorities on ways of cutting class sizes will begin almost at once, although no money will be available until next April.

Raising standards and improving basic literacy and numeracy will be the centrepiece of the White Paper to be published in June. A Bill in the autumn will also end grant-maintained status, and former opted-out schools will have the choice of becoming foundation schools, voluntary-aided like church schools or returning to council control. Foundation schools will have greater freedom than local authority schools but will have to appoint local authority governors.

However, ministers say there will be consultation with grant-maintained schools in the next few months.

The Bill will also lead to parents in areas with grammar schools being able to vote on whether they wish to keep a selective system.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, will meet Sir Ron Dearing, former chairman of the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority, this month about the future shape of higher education. Sir Ron's review is not due until July, so the Queen's Speech will include a general enabling clause foreshadowing changes in student loans and university structure.

Today, ministers will announce plans for fulfilling one of their most ambitious pledges: how to get 250,000 young people off the dole and into either jobs or training using money from a windfall tax on privatised utilities.

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

An audit of the finances and running of the Prison Service is to be set up as a "matter of urgency", it was disclosed yesterday.

The review is aimed at reducing overcrowding and cutting the escalating prison costs. It is expected to lead to closer ties between the Home Office and Prison Service and give ministers greater responsibility for operational and policy decisions.

Labour must also decide whether to ditch its opposition to private jails in order to cope with the rising prison population and need for extra accommodation. Private companies that have already signed contracts to build new jails will be allowed to continue.

PRISONS AUDIT

The number of people in jails in England and Wales has just reached the record 60,000 mark.

It also became clear yesterday that an extra 40,000 handbags are almost certain to be banned - making all revolvers illegal. MPs are expected by October next year to be given a free vote on banning the small calibre .22 revolvers that remain legal, said Home Office sources. Labour has already backed an all-out ban and with its huge majority, most of whom are opposed to the ownership of firearms, a vote against handbags is a certainty. The cost of compensation is likely to be at least £12m.

Jack Straw, the new Home Secretary, said yesterday that his Crime and Disorder Bill, to be announced next Wednesday, would concentrate on

youth crime and neighbour nuisances.

Clearly enjoying his new job, he added: "Four days in Government is better than 18 years in Opposition."

Supporting Mr Straw at the Home Office is Alun Michael, who will be responsible for police matters; Joyce Quin, who will deal with prisons, asylum and immigration; Mike O'Brien, immigration case work; George Howarth, drugs, detailed prison issues and the fire service; and Lord Williams of Mostyn, the Lords and constitutional issues.

Later this week, Mr Straw will meet the director general of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt. Meetings with Metropolitan police commissioner Sir Paul Condon and HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Sir David Ramsbotham will follow.

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Programme falls into place

Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

The Queen's Speech, the Government's parliamentary programme for the next 18 months, is expected to include action on hereditary peers and a Freedom of Information Bill when it is delivered next Wednesday.

The Prime Minister's office said yesterday that Tony Blair had already held a number of meetings on the speech, and a draft was well advanced.

Because of the timing of the election, the parliamentary year will not end, as usual, this autumn, but will continue until the autumn of next year - giving a longer run for the legislation on core commitments like education, law and order.

Early action will be required to set up the devolution referendums for Scotland and Wales, to give specific popular blessing to legislation which would then

be put to Parliament. One advantage of the referendums is that they could provide a democratic mandate for the Government to divert Bills away from the Commons Chamber into "upstairs" committees - denying opponents the chance to clog up the parliamentary works.

Some peers are arguing that if Labour breaks the convention that constitutional legislation should be dealt with in the Commons Chamber, they would then feel free to break the convention that the Lords does not oppose legislation specified in a manifesto. However, it is thought that some ministers would welcome a confrontation between a Labour government, elected with such a striking majority, and hereditary backwoodsmen from the Lords.

Labour promised a Freedom of Information Act in its 1974 manifesto, and it is therefore a pledge that has been reneged

upon before. But because Mr Blair has laid so much store in trust, and in saying that he will not promise anything he will not deliver, the current manifesto commitment on freedom of information is said to be "firm".

On education, the Government has promised early action on nursery vouchers, class sizes,

the assisted places scheme phase-out and new powers to be taken on school standards and local education authorities.

Law and order legislation will include "fast-track" hearings of cases involving persistent young offenders, and responsibility orders for parents of delinquent children.

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Powerplay in Zaire: President's imminent departure prompts speculation as the French examine their post-colonial policy

Mobutu heads for Gabon and exile

Mary Braid
Kinshasa

Mobutu Sese Seko, the beleaguered Zairean dictator, was preparing to leave his presidential residence on the banks of the Congo last night to fly to Gabon for what officials insisted was a three-day summit with neighbouring African leaders.

But it is believed France will be the President's final destination and that he is leaving Zaire, the nation he has plundered for 32 years to amass a personal fortune, for the last time.

In the next few days, Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader, is expected to take the Zairean capital, Kinshasa, in the climax to a seven-month military offensive in which he has seized with astounding ease most of the country. He has repeatedly warned President Mobutu, 66, who suffers from prostate cancer, to stand down or be removed.

Diplomats believe the President's meeting with leaders of Gabon, Congo and Togo is a face-saving device to allow him to be out of the country when Mr Kabila rolls into Kinshasa. "If you ask me... I would say he plans to make this a transit stop on the way to France," said a Mobutu aide who did not want to give his name.

But Mr Mobutu's flight would not guarantee a bloodless coup. Government ministers claimed last night that their forces were battling to retake Kikwit, the strategic town on the road to Kinshasa recently captured by rebels. They claim to have killed hundreds of rebel soldiers. If true, it suggests that the establishment — with or without Mr Mobutu — may still be prepared to fight for Kinshasa.

At Kinshasa Airport, Mr Mobutu's unpaid and sluggish soldiers were feeling the heat yesterday. They argued and shrugged in the dilapidated car park while younger skinny recruits in threadbare fatigues begged for dollars. As the rebels advance, the army becomes more edgy. But ordinary people — most of whom are desperately poor — were delighted to hear of Mr Mobutu's trip.

"I want Kabila to come," said Etienne, 35, a waiter in the VIP suite at the airport. He spent the week watching Mr Mobutu's cronies scuttle into exile dragging heavy cases.

Kabila has proved a strong man in a country where strong men are admired. But Vincent, a middle-aged Emigration Officer, is worried. Kinshasa, he says, will not fall without bloodshed and he still hoped for a political deal. The rebels, he warned, may not be Zaire's salvation. "They have killed refugees in the east and that is very bad. What we need is an election and though Kabila is popular Etienne Tshisekedi [the leading opposition figure] is still the most popular politician here."



The long search: Rwandan Hutu refugees scan a notice board showing pictures of unaccompanied children at a transit camp near Kisangani, in Zaire

Photograph: AP

France loses its influence in Africa

John Lichfield
Paris

Is President Mobutu's ignominious departure a mortal blow for French policy in Africa? Perhaps more accurately, it is a demonstration that the traditional French post-colonial approach to Africa — a kind of Machiavellian clientelism — is already dead.

The collapse of the Mobutu regime may even bring bitter comfort to some in Paris — including the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé — who have long argued that it is time, in the interests of France and Africa, to adopt a fresh policy.

For nearly 50 years, France was acknowledged as the ultimate power-broker in Francophone Africa, initially in its own former colonies, and then, from the 1970s onwards, in the former Belgian possessions of Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi.

At the weekend, Zaire's fate was negotiated aboard a South African warship by an American diplomat. The French ambassador to the neighbouring Congo, was allowed aboard but, according to the newspaper *Liberation* was asked to "stay at the bar".

In the end, Mr Mobutu seems to have realised the limitations of French power. The President-for-life did not even inform the French government last week that he had decided, in principle, to give up office. Paris learnt of his intentions by reading the *New York Times*.

The Africanist old-guard in Paris, which has been running virtually a parallel foreign policy since President Jacques Chirac came to power two years ago, tried to prop up Mr Mobutu until the end. There is evidence that they connived in January in a desultory attempt to put together a mercenary defence force against Laurent Kabila's rebels.

A French businessman who helped to set up a rag-tag force of 80, mainly Serbian, mercenaries, and three aircraft, does appear to have been linked to the President's special African adviser, Fernand Wibaux. But diplomats in Paris believe that Mr Wibaux was acting without the backing of the Prime Minister and Foreign Ministry and even against the wishes of the President's chief-of-staff, Dominique Villepin, who is normally in charge of Africa policy at the Elysée palace. President Chirac's own role is opaque.

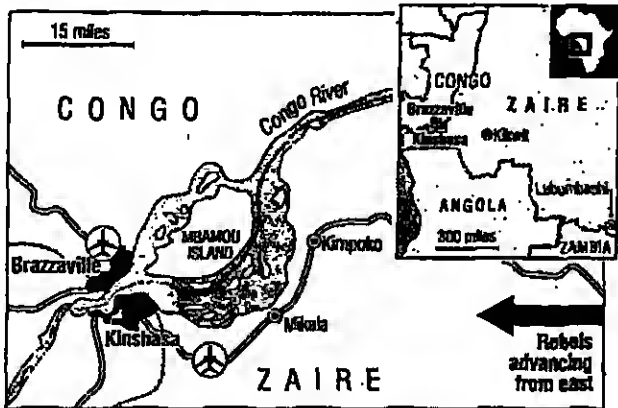
Overall, it appears that the old African hands were acting from a stubborn instinct to meddle, rather than in any real hope of preserving the Zairean status quo. The minute scale of the operation — and its abject failure — are, in themselves, evidence that an era of French-African relations is over.

Much of the commentary in the French press, and by French politicians, has portrayed events in Zaire over the last six months as a triumph for a deliberate American strategy to destroy French influence in Africa.

There is some evidence that the United States provided logistical and material support for Mr Kabila. No doubt the US has its own reasons for doing so: Zaire is a richly-endowed country. But President Mobutu, during the Cold War, was as much an American client as a French one. US policy, if coherent at all, was as much driven by a belated recognition that Zaire, under Mobutu, was a corrupt and disintegrating basket case. Belgium also had ceased to support the ruler of its former colony.

Only France continued to champion him to the end, locked into a habit of supporting the "big meo" of Francophone Africa, in return for economic advantage, but more importantly, because of a kind of amorphous addiction to political and linguistic influence on the continent. In truth, France gained less economic advantage from Zaire than Belgium or the United States.

In essence, French complaints that the US is driving events in Africa miss a crucial point. The events may be influenced by Washington, but they are being driven mostly by Africans. No amount of US aid could have produced such a rapid rebel advance across Zaire unless it was supported by Zaireans. On the other hand, without the tacit US support Paris received during the Cold War, the old French policy of unconditional support for client African dictators is defunct.



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international

Cook launches mission to make fresh start with Europe

Rupert Cornwell

Taking the reins of his new job swiftly and firmly in hand, Robin Cook is planning an unprecedented "Mission Statement" to Britain's diplomats next week, aimed at motivating his staff and setting out the new foreign policy priorities of the Blair government.

After four hectic days of meetings and briefings in London, the first Labour Foreign Secretary in 18 years today makes his first foray into Europe, with brief visits to Paris and Bonn. He will hold talks with his French and German opposite numbers, as well as Lionel Jospin and Oskar Lafontaine, the leaders of the two countries' socialist opposition parties,

ahead of a special meeting of European foreign ministers in Brussels in a fortnight.

Mr Cook will project Britain's desire for a new start in relations with Europe, soured by years of stonewalling from the Conservatives. His long-desired message to foreign ministers Hervé de Charette and Klaus Kinkel will be that the new

Labour administration is ready to be more flexible over matters such as majority voting and a greater role for the Strasbourg parliament.

"A change in tone and some change in substance," was how officials described the new approach.

The trip to France and Germany raises the curtain on a bone-breaking schedule for Mr Cook over the

next seven weeks of summits and ministerial meetings involving the EU, Nato, G-7, the WEU and the OECD. It will be capped by the Hong Kong handover ceremony at the end of June. In between he hopes to visit Washington.

A first unveiling of how Labour intends to run foreign policy comes next week with a personal address by

the Foreign Secretary to his staff. The film of Mr Cook setting forth his goals will be made by Sir David Putnam, to be sent to British missions around the world.

Mr Cook wants greater representation of women and ethnic minorities at senior diplomatic levels and greater openness to the media. He will place new emphasis on

global environmental issues, the revitalization of the UN and human rights. Measures may well include strict curbs on arms exports to offending regimes. Nigeria and Burma are obvious candidates. On arms control and a new round of reductions in nuclear weapons, a Labour government also may be much more activist than its Tory predecessor.

Asia puts military wares on display

Singapore — One of the many remarkable things about Singapore is that, despite its position at the heart of one of the most colourful continents, it makes South-East Asia feel like a calm and orderly place.

Here, chewing gum is a controlled substance, crossing the road off a zebra crossing can land you a \$400 fine, and the streets are so clean that you could eat your dinner off them.

But this week, Singapore is hosting an event based upon the opposite assumption: that Asia is an increasingly vulnerable region, a continent of territorial rivalries and escalating military expansion.

The event is known as Imdex Asia '97 (for International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference), a four-day event involving 300 companies from 18 countries, and thousands of visiting diplomats, defence procurement officials, serving officers and journalists.

Ten battle ships, from small attack craft from Brunei to the mighty British aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious*, are moored in Singapore in support of their national industries. The exhibiting companies have paid as much as \$30,000 to set up their stands at the biggest in a growing number of regional arms fairs which now regularly take place in Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

They owe their existence to a striking shift in military spending patterns since the end of the Cold War brought drastic cutbacks in defence budgets in Europe and America. Asia is virtually the only place in the world where defence procurement budgets are consistently on the rise. The reasons for this were outlined by speakers at the

Richard Lloyd Parry reports on arms firms cashing in on regional rivalries

exhibition and an associated conference on the theme "Protection of the Seaways".

With the end of the super-power rivalry, regional states are increasingly having to take responsibility for their own security against a variety of threats and destabilising influences in one of the most strategically crucial areas in the world. The dramatic economic growth of the South-East Asian countries over the past 15 years has made the security of its sea lanes more important than ever.

If the graphs climb at anticipated rates then, by 2010, one-third of the world's production will take place in East Asia.

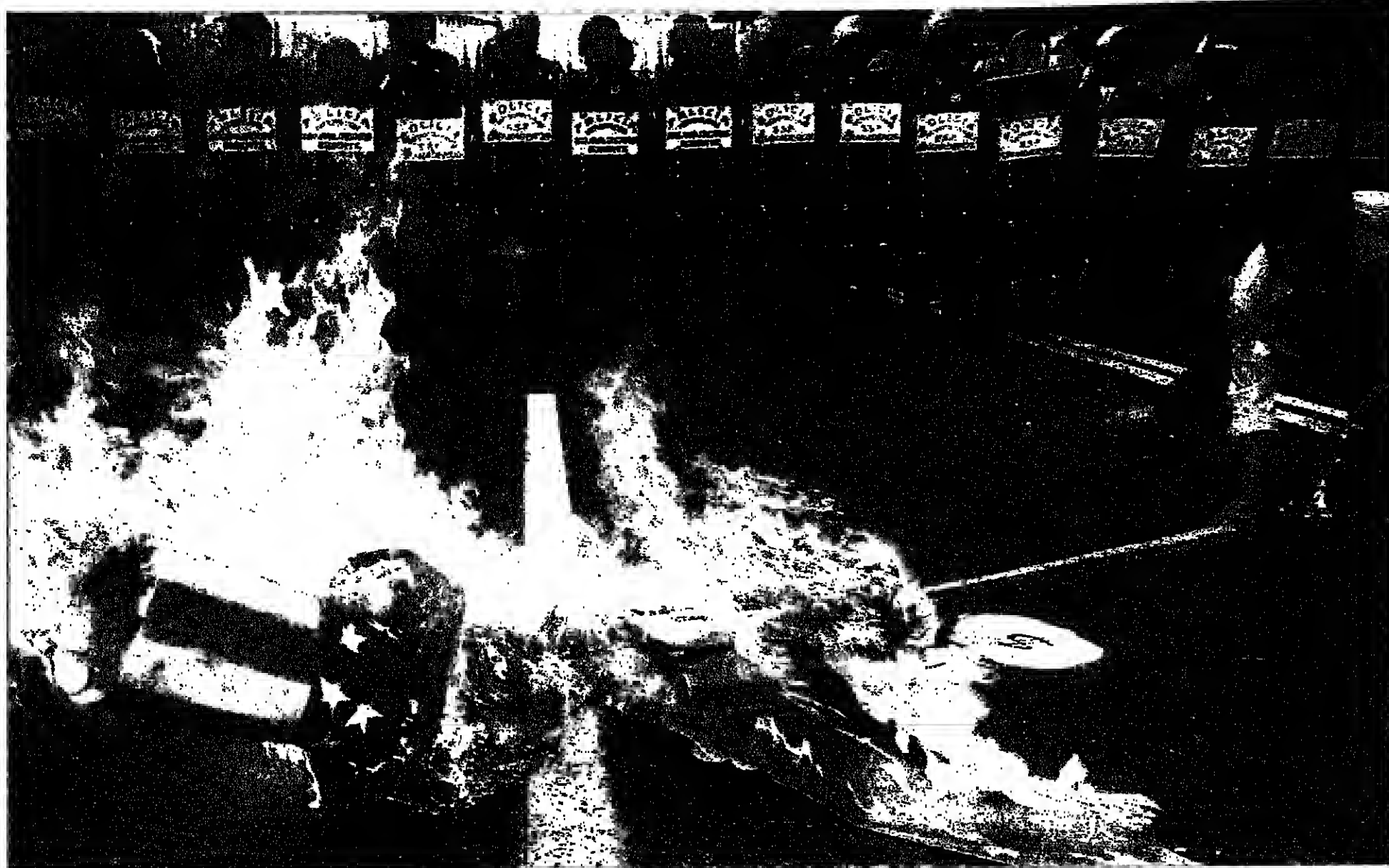
Already the Malacca Straits, the narrow waters which divide the Indonesian island of Sumatra from Malaysia and Singapore, carry more ships every day than the Panama and Suez canals put together.

By far the largest number of cases of piracy (71 out of 94 world-wide in 1994) take place in Asia — but more disturbing by far are the flash points developing between nation states.

A striking number of these focus on islands. Yesterday, the Chinese foreign ministry protested after the latest in a series of visits by Japanese nationalists to a group of islands variously called the Diaoyu and the Senkaku and claimed by Tokyo, Peking and Taipei.

Last week, China and the Philippines renewed their claims to the even more embattled Spratly Islands — which are believed to contain fuel deposits and, which are also claimed by Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei.

But the region's principal source of tension is China, which over the past 30 years has raised the status of its navy to the most senior of the three services. China's ambitions to establish a continental "blue water" fleet by 2020 have stimulated an arms boom among the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean).



Fired up: A demonstrator in Mexico City burning an effigy of Uncle Sam in protest at President Clinton's visit for talks yesterday with President Zedillo. The Mexican president described Mr Clinton as a "good friend" to the country in an attempt to address concerns that US actions on trade and drug trafficking undermine national integrity. Photograph: AP

Doubts emerge over US 'balanced budget'

Chorus of criticism dampens initial euphoria. Mary Dejevsky reports

When President Clinton and Republican leaders reached their eleventh hour agreement on a budget plan late last week, there was prime-time televised euphoria on both sides.

Mr Clinton broke into a visit to Baltimore to rehearse the benefits of the deal to the media, while Newt Gingrich, Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Trent Lott, the Senate majority leader, beamed and enthused their way through a special press conference at the Capitol.

For Mr Clinton, the chief victory lay in salvaging the Democrats' promised speeding plans, including his own election promise to extend medical insurance to the country's 5 million uninsured children. Mr Gingrich's chief claim was to have "completed" his Contract for America — the government-cutting, tax-cutting agenda on which the Republicans took control of Congress three years ago. For Mr Lott, the key was to have reached the objective of a balanced budget "by cutting spending not by raising taxes".

Less than a week later, however, the five-year deal to balance the budget for the first time

in three decades is looking considerably less substantial than it did at the outset.

There is criticism from the tax-cutting right of the Republican party, hesitation from sections of the Democratic left and a general public scepticism about the feasibility of balancing the budget at all. One poll over the weekend had fewer than 20 per cent agreeing with the proposition that the deficit would be eliminated by 2002.

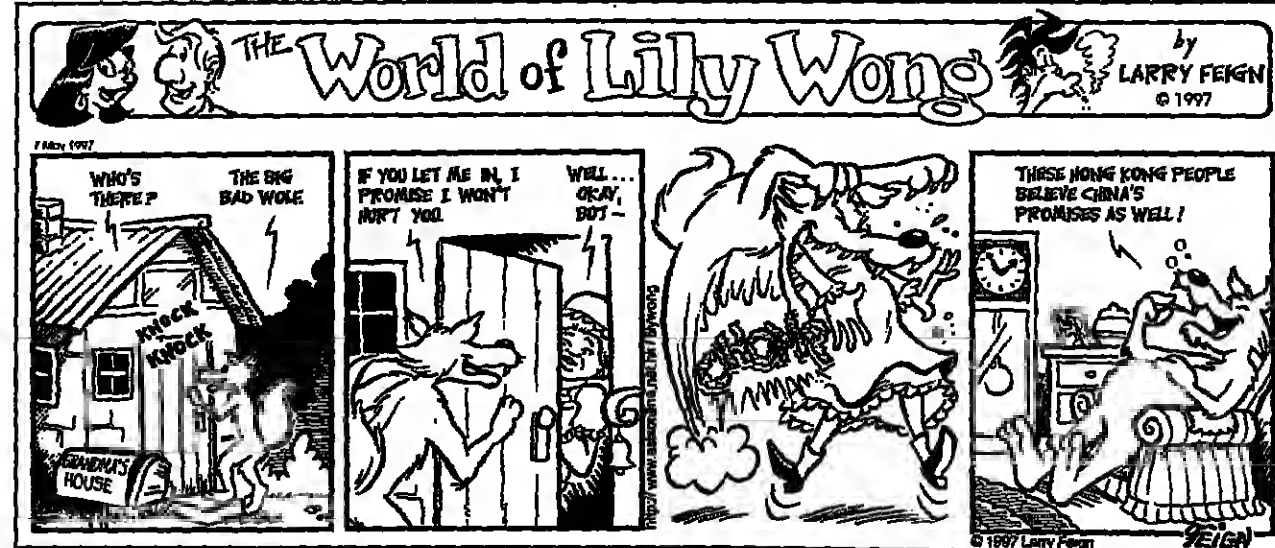
Some of the most qualified criticism has come from Republican Senator, Phil Gramm, a disappointed tax-cutter who has been filling the airwaves to denounce the agreement. Likening himself variously to a skunk at the garden party or "Horatius keeping the bridge", Mr Gramm warns that the terms of the deal may raise the deficit rather than cutting it. While Mr Clinton has spoken of "steadily declining deficits" over the five years of the agreement, Mr Gramm and his allies ask: "What five-year agreement? What price the continuation of the agreement if the

Democrats win a majority in the House of Representatives next year, or after the next presidential election in 2000? They claim that the deal is "back-loaded", so that the spending increases are concentrated in the next two years, while the tax-cutting provisions are concentrated in the last two years.

If the economics of the balanced budget by 2002 may be questionable, the politics are not. As constructed, the deal allows Mr Clinton to banish the popular image of the Democrats as an irresponsible party of spending, while allowing the Re-

publicans to shed their image of heartlessness. As one right-wing commentator said ruefully, the "balanced budget" deal was one that neither party could have steered through Congress alone — but with Mr Clinton and Republican leaders acting together,

it was almost certain to be passed — even though the details have yet to be hammered out. In the conciliatory tone of one who recognises a political victory when he sees one, the White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, said of the deal: "We can't govern in an environment in which the Democrats, who are a minority in the Congress, can get everything they want."



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مركزنا من الوصل

Israel blamed for Lebanon booby-trap blast

Robert Fisk
Beirut

The near-dormant ceasefire committee in southern Lebanon is to meet in emergency session this afternoon after two Lebanese construction workers were blown to pieces by a booby-trap bomb – allegedly planted by the Israelis – in the town of Nabatieh.

Lebanese police officials say that a second bomb, which was dismantled by ordinance officers, was made

of components bearing Hebrew markings. Both had been constructed of glass-fibre – identical to booby-trap devices laid by Israeli soldiers at the village of Siddiqin last year.

Israel, meanwhile, has prepared its own complaint to the ceasefire committee: the wounding of four civilians inside its occupation zone by a bomb set off by Hizbollah near the village of Qlaia on Monday. The bomb had been directed at a squad of pro-Israeli militiamen from the "South Lebanon Army" which was passing

the scene in an unmarked car. Two of the SLA men were also wounded.

Although a low-level war has continued between Hizbollah and Israeli troops in southern Lebanon since last April's Israeli bombing which killed almost 200 civilians, yesterday's blast in Nabatieh caused grave concern to both the Lebanese authorities and to the United Nations peacekeeping force.

It was an identical glass-fibre bomb – concealed as a stone in a wall – which killed a teenage boy in southern Lebanon just over a year ago, provoking a volley of Hizbollah rockets into Israel and, in turn, prompting Israel's bloody counter-bombardment. Claims that Israel was behind yesterday's deaths would be easier to dismiss if the Israelis had not been caught planting glass-fibre bombs near Siddiqin on April 18th, 1996. Israeli troops later gave UN officers maps of their hidden bombs, all of which were defused by the UN and all of which were made of glass-fibre.

Hizbollah also accused Israel of responsibility yesterday, while its rival Amal militia stated that the killings were a deliberate attempt to create unrest in advance of Pope John Paul II's visit to Lebanon at the weekend.

Lebanese newspapers have been speculating for several days that Israel might stage some form of attack to disrupt the Pope's trip, which the Lebanese government regards as the ultimate symbol that the country has emerged from its 16-year civil war. More than 20,000 Lebanese troops will be guarding the Pope during his travels across Beirut and during the

Mass which he plans to say on Sunday in the open space that marks the ruined pre-war centre of the capital.

The ceasefire committee has met only once – and then for only two minutes – since the Arab League decided to break off all negotiations with Israel earlier this year. Syria's cigar-smoking delegate will be sitting opposite the Israelis at the meeting at UN headquarters at Naqoura this afternoon, along with Colonel Maher Tofaili, the Lebanese delegate who visited the scene of the

bombing in Nabatieh yesterday. Under the terms of the truce, Israelis and Hizbollah may attack each other but must not hurt civilians or fire from civilian areas of southern Lebanon.

Yesterday Israeli warplanes attacked suspected Hizbollah targets in the Syrian-controlled eastern Bekaa Valley. Two jets fired four rockets into a mountainous area southwest of the town of Mashghara, just north of Israel's south Lebanon occupation zone.

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Brazil's soaps wash away the mother tongue of Portugal

Brazilian soap operas have invaded Portugal's four television channels and now reign supreme over prime-time scheduling. Of last year's top-50 programmes, 48 were soaps from Brazil. Their influence has become so strong that the Portuguese are adopting Brazilian expressions and customs in an astonishing process of cultural colonialism in reverse.

Up to eight Brazilian soap operas or telenovelas are shown every day, back to back, with a respite only for the lunchtime and evening news. By channel-hopping you can spend your entire waking hours watching them, and to judge from the ratings, many Portuguese do.

One hugely popular saga, *O rei do gado* (Cattle King) that has just finished – sending regretful sighs sweeping the nation – was seen by a record-breaking 74 per cent of television-watching Portuguese – outscoring even football, with which it frequently competed for the peak slots.

Based on Brazil's centuries-long conflict between landowners and peasants, its daily hour-long episodes tackled the issue of land reform. The climax coincided with a cross-country trek by real-life landless Brazilians who marched upon the capital Brasilia in pursuit of justice.

In Portugal, the language is becoming peppered with Brazilian soap slang, like *cafune* (caress), *fofoca* (intrigue, parti-

Elizabeth Nash watches the drama unfold as imported serials take over the life of a nation

cularly a political one), *curtir* (to have fun), or *agua com açúcar* (to take things easy or describe something as honey-sweet). The expressions themselves give some idea of the soaps' content.

Todo bem (everything OK) is ousting the more usual *como esta?* as Portugal's way of saying hello, and the Brazilian *Esta a dar e tá!* are now commonly used by Portuguese for "OK, good".

Even more remarkable are the copied gestures: one landowner character had his wrists laced with gold bracelets, which he would shake when angry. Portuguese – even without bracelets – have copied the gesture.

"Demographic studies show that Brazilian soaps are watched by all social and economic groups, including children, and by only slightly more women than men," says Manuel Fonseca, Deputy Programme Director of the private Portuguese channel, SIC, which has cornered the soap market through a preferential deal struck two years ago with Brazil's Globo television.

Globo, which owns 15 per cent of SIC, produces Brazil's glossiest and most expensive

soaps, like *Indomada* (Indomitable) about a free-thinking woman who enjoys sex with her husband, that has replaced *O rei do gado*, *Corpo e Alma* (Body and Soul), and *Amor de Mãe* (My Own Angel).

The genre has a noble lineage. The first, *Gabiola*, based on the novel by Jorge Amado, conquered Portuguese living rooms in 1975 in the heady days following the "carnation revolution" against the generals. An instant hit, it starred the actress Sonia Braga who made an international name for herself portraying Amado heroines.

Amado's entire oeuvre, with its lush settings, sensuous females, beautiful boys and scowling patriarchs, plus its profound social conscience, is quintessential soap material, to which Brazilian producers have contributed top-class actors, directors and camera operators.

"There is a big difference between Brazilian soaps and those from, say, Mexico and Venezuela which are very bad," says Mr. Fonseca. Globo invests much more money in sets, writers, costumes and actors. "They are comparable to the best American soaps, like Dallas," he says. "Not kitsch at all."

But one Portuguese man confessed that he made every effort to keep away from them. "Because they're addictive, you stop going out and your life just passes you by".



Heroine: Sonia Braga, who rose to fame in Brazil's early soap operas. Photograph: Scope

significant shorts

US army rapist jailed for 25 years

Delmar Simpson, the United States army staff sergeant convicted last week of raping six female recruits in his charge, was sentenced yesterday to 25 years in prison.

The sentence was agreed by a six-member court-martial jury after a day-long hearing in which Simpson apologised to his wife, his children, and the trainees "who believe I brought them harm", and in which his mother made an emotional plea for mercy. A psychologist testified that Simpson suffered from "a narcissistic personality disorder". Simpson insisted that all the women concerned had agreed to sex, and he is expected to appeal.

Mary Dejevsky – Washington

Tenet makes case to lead CIA

President Bill Clinton's choice to lead the CIA into the 21st century, George Tenet, vowed yesterday to close the door on the Cold War and draw more frequently on expertise in the United States private sector. "Ultimately, leadership at this moment means... embracing the challenges and opportunities of the new era," he said in an opening statement to the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is considering his nomination.

Reuters – Washington

Pre-dawn attack on Taliban

Anti-Taliban soldiers launched a pre-dawn offensive outside the deserted town of Jebul Siraj on the strategic Salang Highway that links Kabul to northern Afghanistan. Opposition troops made initial gains, according to the Taliban Islamic militia, but were later driven back into the mountains.

AP – Jebul Siraj

Algiers car bomb kills two

A car bomb killed two people and wounded about 20, many of them schoolchildren, in Algiers. The bomb was in a car parked opposite the Lycée Frantz Fanon at the entrance to the crowded suburb of Bab El-Oued.

Reuters – Paris

Post delivered 87 years late

A card mailed 87 years ago from Copenhagen, finally showed up in its intended town of Agersted, 160 miles away. The card was mailed in August 1909 to eight-year-old Ida Ahlefeldt by an aunt. It then took an unexplained detour to Russia, where it languished, and recently made its way back to Denmark, and to Johan Weiche, the nephew of Ahlefeldt, who died in 1954.

AP – Copenhagen

NatWest Base Rate

NatWest announces that with effect from 6 May 1997 its Base Rate is increased from 6.00% to 6.25% per annum.

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If last night's Cook Report sickened you, this is your chance to do something.

Last night ITV's 'Cook Report' exposed the damning evidence supplied by IFAW, of the horrific slaughter of wild animals in South Africa. Lions, leopards, even lionesses with cubs. All were on offer as targets for a rich man's 'kill'.

Bred in cages or illegally enticed from the Kruger National Park, dazed by drugs, they become an easy target. And there's no escape, because this hunt is a 'canned hunt' and takes place in a fenced-off private compound.

As one ex farm manager put it "it's like shooting fish in a barrel".

A shot to the body is almost always recommended, as a shot to the head would spoil the look of the trophy when mounted on the wall.

As the ex farm manager went on to say... "even when the lioness was skinned and the milk was pouring out of her teats, it didn't bother them."

But it bothers IFAW. And it bothered Roger Cook enough to expose this appalling trade in animal suffering.

If it bothers you, please send as much as you can to help IFAW buy more land where no animals will ever be killed.



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international

Secret of why the Mafia has never shot a soul

In a famous comedy sketch by the Italian film director Dino Risi, a mafioso is gunned down by a passing car on the church steps of his hill-top village in Sicily. The police come running out and ask the man who shot him. "Shot?" he answers in his dying breath. "I haven't been shot. I don't know what you're talking about!"

Sicily's reputation for refusing to talk about the Mafia has long since entered popular folklore. Everyone knows about *omertà*, the mythical code of silence that envelops the island in a shroud of sinister mystery, and indeed anyone who walks unannounced into a Mafia-controlled village and starts asking direct questions is not likely to get very far.

In truth, though, the culture of silence has undergone a radical change. Gone is the time when the post-war Archbishop of Palermo, Ernesto Ruffillo, could blithely deny the existence of the Mafia and keep a straight face (in fact he was in cahoots with some of the biggest thugs in the outfit).

The dramatic Mafia murders of the Eighties and early Nineties, and the equally dramatic mass arrests and mantras that followed, have made the business of denial rather more delicate.

Since the first mafioso to turn state's evidence, Tommaso Buscetta, started talking in 1984, Cosa Nostra has effectively ceased to be a secret organisation.

Andrew Gumbel concludes his series with a look at the mythical code of silence

The new MAFIA

tion; *omertà*, at least as applied to Mafia members, is a dead concept. And the word "Mafia" itself has fully entered the public domain, after decades of euphemistic references to "the friends of the friends".

But that is where the linguistic clarity ends. For reasons of fear or of deeply ingrained self-censorship, Sicilians do not willingly stick their heads above the parapet and talk about the organised crime in their midst. These days they will acknowledge the Mafia's existence, but will often try to depict it as something that does not affect them.

Strategies intended to convey this non-complicity vary. One of the most common is simply: "Don't ask me, ask someone else."

The head of the local business association in Niscemi, Giovanni Millitari, responded to a



The mob: Al Capone's St Valentine's Day massacre, as depicted in the eponymous 1967 film (above); and (right) Tommaso Buscetta on his way to trial in Palermo in 1984



question about extortion and murder in his town with the words: "Sconosco il problema." What he no doubt meant by this was: "I am not familiar with the problem," but the beautifully ambiguous formulation also means "I refuse to recognise the problem".

The snag with such a response is that it borders on outright denial, and denial is usually interpreted in the complex semantic code of the Sicilian Mafia as a veiled admission of complicity. The Mafia works best where it can work silently, refusing to talk is effectively contributing to the Mafia cause.

Another familiar strain, and a piece of pure syllogism encountered all over Italy, is: "What we have is not Cosa Nostra, therefore we do not have a Mafia problem." Cosa Nostra is

traditionally the most powerful Mafia group, concentrated in Palermo and western Sicily, and for years the two terms were synonymous.

But there are virulent Mafia cultures spreading through eastern Sicily, Calabria, Puglia, the Naples area and even the north of Italy. Strictly speaking, these other Mafias have their own names such as 'ndrangheta or Sacra Corona Unita, a technicality which intimidated or suspect citizens will willingly exploit to confound the over-inquisitive.

Or, sometimes, they might even say: "What we have is not as bad as the Mafia."

Yes, said the mayor of Niscemi, Salvatore Liardo, we have murders, drugs trafficking, a corrupt police force, extortion and armed robbery, but at least it is not the Mafia. "It is just a

problem with delinquency." This strategy is a variation on "What we have is not Cosa Nostra".

The fact that Niscemi is

Sicilians do not willingly stick their head above the parapet

plagued by a different Mafia phenomenon is enough to get Mayor Liardo off the hook.

Turning the issue upside down takes denial one stage further, turning bad to good: "The Mafia is actually better than what we have," some say.

A very different strategy this, the product of a mentality that believes the Mafia to be an honourable organisation at root that has been besmirched by the recent and insubstantial business interests such as arms and drugs trafficking.

Thus one finds the likes of Frank Zeppia, a convicted member of Cosa Nostra in the United States now confined for two years to his home town of Caltanissetta, bemoaning the outbreak of gangsterism in the surrounding area. "These guys ain't Mafia," he said, "they're pieces of shit."

And finally, the ultimate denial: "The Mafia is not Sicilian, it comes from Rome to oppress us."

Costanza, a student leader from Siracusa, explained, "The true spirit of the Sicilian Mafia

is Salvatore Giuliano, who fought for our independence by stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. The people they call mafiosi today and put in jail are no more than tools of central government. If Giuliano were alive today, there'd be no lack of Sicilians prepared to fight and die for him."

This argument stems from the very origins of the modern Mafia as a warped resistance movement against Italian unification, and reflects bubbling resentment at the excessively centralised state structure, even in Sicily which has its own reinforced regional government.

While it is true that the Rome government has been severely compromised by the Mafia in the past, it is absurd to ascribe any kind of Sicilian or mafioso purity to Giuliano, a bandit operating at the end of

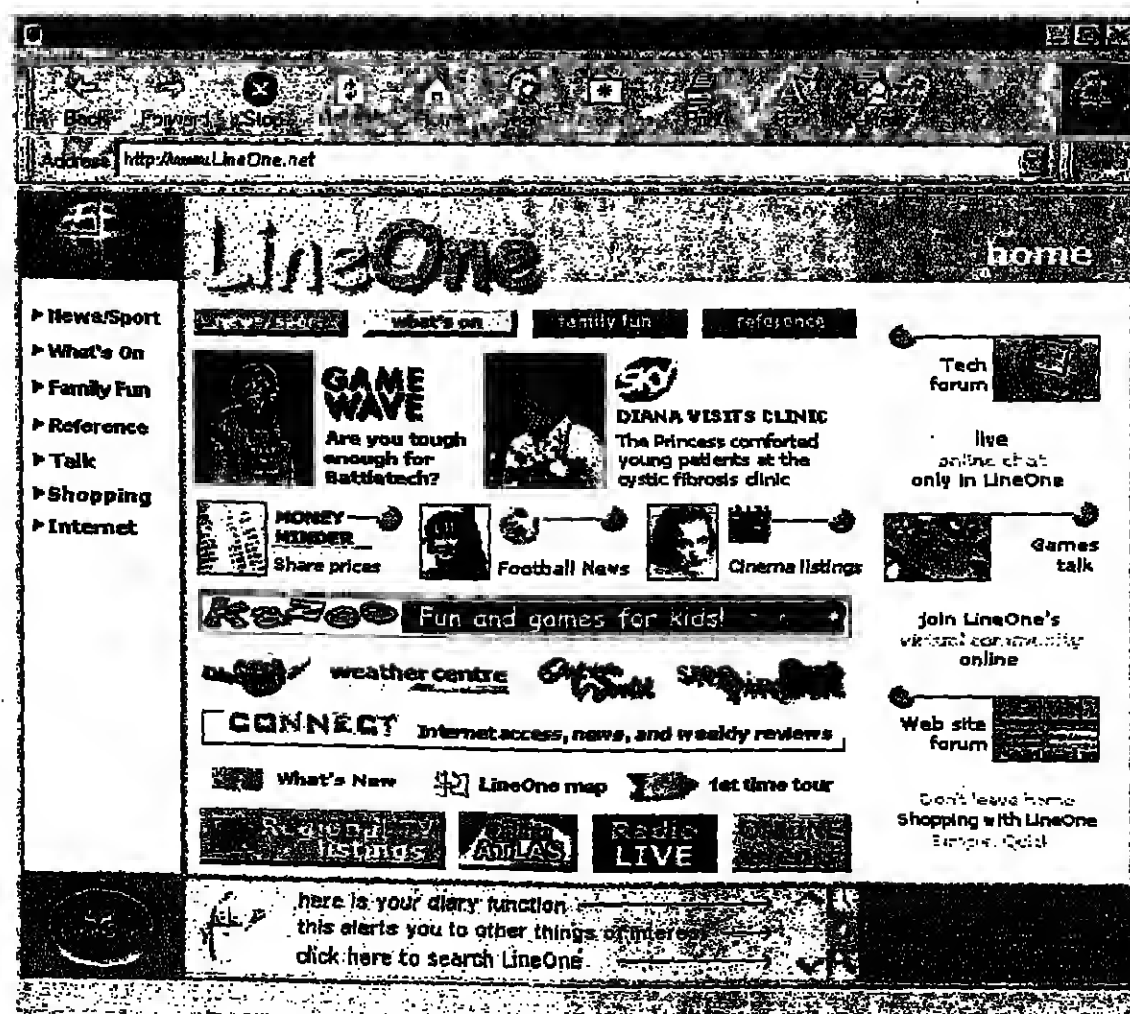
the Second World War with a glamorous reputation but who was used in turn by the independence movement, the Mafia and the Christian Democrat party to commit despicable acts before being betrayed by one of his own men.

The line does not hold for another, more profound reason. As the sociologist Diego Gambetta has argued, the Mafia does not have an ideology, a political programme or even a coherent set of rules of behaviour. It is essentially an economic phenomenon that controls territory through the sale of that double-edged commodity, protection.

That explains the continuing reticence of Sicilians about Cosa Nostra. Protect the Mafia with your silence, and you in turn will be protected. Talk carelessly and there is no telling what might happen.



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مركزنا من الامم

Something rather splendid at the Bank

Welcome to the modern world – a place we have inhabited since last Friday morning. It is a place where you talk in a civilised fashion to your European neighbours, where a Secretary of State for the Environment can think aloud about road pricing, and where a Treasury minister can tackle monetary policy in the same way as foreign countries (such as Germany and the United States of America) where interest rates are consistently lower and price stability part of the natural order.

Yesterday Gordon Brown did his bit for modernism. By freeing day-to-day decisions by the Bank of England from Treasury supervision, he also pinned price stability on the Blair government's masthead in a way which, for all their talk, Lady Thatcher's and John Major's Chancellors never managed. New Labour starts to acquire its own historic identity as the low-inflation party. (And, a bonus for a pro-European, Gordon Brown moves the British institutional set-up a good step nearer to the single currency norm.)

What the new Chancellor has done is both dramatic and banal. Dramatic because, at a stroke, he exorcises the ghosts of Montague Norman, Philip Snowden, Lord Cromer and Denis Healey. Banal, because he has done for money no more than unteemed councils have been doing for refuse collection. A public service – the pursuit of stable

prices – has been contracted out. The Bank of England gets a target for inflation and is invited to use its big gun – setting the price of money – to secure it. (A really radical Chancellor would have gone further and pegged the Governor's salary to his success, a really, really radical Chancellor would have translated the Bank to a greenfield site in Docklands and flogged Threadneedle Street at a great profit, abolishing those chaps in salmon pink kit on the way.)

What the Bank gets is freedom rather than independence. In the new model the Governor is an expert, expected to use professional discretion. There is a comparison to be made with the courts, although, unlike a judge, the Governor's decisions will affect the livelihoods of many people – their domestic finances, their job prospects. It is appropriate, therefore, that he accounts for the Bank's decisions. Gordon Brown is also turning that "he" into a collective, a Monetary Policy Committee, overlooked by a more representative Court. This reform ought usefully to allow non-City perspectives in.

That word "representative" is ambiguous. Why? Because part of the basic case for giving the Bank autonomy is that the markets trust the Bank more than elected politicians. Only bankers' decisions will command. Gordon Brown said, "the necessary confidence". By clear implication, markets

trust politicians somewhat less. All the more reason to ensure that the Bank is held publicly to account.

Gordon Brown is now free to concentrate on welfare-to-work and the next Budget. That "concentrate" could be ominous if it means he is seeking to fine-tune the economy in 1970s style – that is to say, to fiddle with taxes to secure deflation of demand. There is as yet no satisfactory agreement on both the scale of such squeezing or even its necessity. Gordon Brown will do well to avoid being pressganged into unnecessary fiscal tacking.

Much more important for the new

Chancellor is to address the fundamental question of solvency. Is this Government committed to spending plans that cannot be supported by likely revenues? Yes, the Chancellor has room for manoeuvre on borrowing. The more successful his new monetary agent the Bank of England is, the healthier look the national accounts. Likewise, the longer the upswing of the present economic cycle lasts, the more buoyant the official revenues. A few more hundreds of millions for the National Health Service budget can be lost and found with ease. But not billions – for social security, pensions,

family credit, universities, school-teachers, school buildings.

If he is to find extra money – significantly more – then he will have to raise taxes. But if the Government is true to its promise not to raise income tax rates, this means finding fiscal space among allowances, corporate taxation, indirect taxes, the taxation of wealth, council tax and so on. That there is such space is undeniable. But the political question has first to be asked: should the Government be raising taxes at all, given its pre-election promises? It is all very well to argue, as some have over the weekend, about the precise meaning of Labour's promises, but the real point is that voters will expect Messrs Brown and Blair to stick to the spirit of their tax pledge, not merely the letter. Nothing would be worse for New Labour's reputation than an attempt to smuggle in tax increases like a Colombian coke-dealer.

Yet Gordon Brown still has room. Take mortgage tax relief. No such allowance should be immune from examination of its effects. It is not needed to encourage house purchase; it does little or nothing to stop dispossession. Conceived as an element in housing policy, the case for its abolition or further restriction is strong. In other words, tax reform for the sake of the Government's social objectives strengthens the budgetary case enormously.

Gordon Brown spoke eloquently yesterday about the long term. His

reform of the Bank is a useful first step towards a permanent framework for stable growth. His Budget ought to be another – provided he keeps the future shape of a prosperous and fair Britain at the front of his mind.

Knives (and forks) out for the Tories

As soon as the scale of their defeat became clear, it was obvious that Tory right-wingers were going to need their Granita. The word "Granita" is just becoming established in politics. It is the name of the Islington restaurant where Tony Blair and Gordon Brown agreed, over various parmesan and rocket salad-garnished nosh that Tony was top and Gordon was not. This was painful for Brown, but enabled Blair to become Labour leader, then Prime Minister. The right-wingers need a Granita because, like Blair-Brown, they can't all be leader. They need to do a deal. But Michael Howard, enticing William Hague to his Belgravia flat for a champagne compact that quickly lost its fizz, has failed to learn from New Labour. You have to do these painful deals over dinner, not a couple of drinks – and on neutral territory. It takes at least an hour and a half of munching and eyeballing and straight-talking before such things are secure.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Under PR no one gets what they voted for

Sir: Your leading article of 6 May on proportional representation suggests that the present electoral system is self-evidently "the least perfect of all" and points out that if the parties' representation was proportional to the votes cast, Labour would have 235 MPs, the Tories 201 and the Liberals 165.

In other words, there would now be a Lib-Lab or possibly, and with the help of the minor parties, a Lib-Tory government. And who would have voted for the Lib-Lab? Those who voted Labour because they believe Gordon Brown's promise that he'll keep taxes down? Or those who voted Liberal Democrat because Paddy Ashdown promised to put taxes up?

What did the Lib-Lab manifesto look like? Did you see a copy? Did any voter? And did they also see a copy of the Lib-Tory manifesto or even the Lib-Tory-Green-Referendum-Martin Bell manifesto?

The worst thing you can say about the present system is that 44.4 per cent of the voters have the government they voted for and the government which can be held accountable to the promises it made during the campaign. The worst that can be said for a government elected by PR is that nobody voted for it and that there is no set of promises to which it can be held.

First-past-the-post is, indeed, imperfect, but it is the least imperfect of all the options.
JOHN DIAMOND
London W12

Sir: I would like to tell Chas Loft ("Next time, can I have a vote that counts?", Letters, 3 May) not to give up hope. As he has only voted four times he is obviously a relatively young man and so has more chance to get his wish than I ever had. After voting Liberal and Liberal Democrat for 50 years, only once has my chosen candidate got into Parliament. I hoped to get a second one this time, but it wasn't to be.
HAZEL READ
Eastbourne, East Sussex

End of polling booth indolence

Sir: What should be compulsory in elections is not voting but attendance at the polling booth (Letters, 5 May). One may respect the deeply-held convictions of certain religious groups who take no part in secular government, but it is quite a different matter with people who do not vote because they cannot be bothered. Those who tell canvassers, "You're all the same" or, "I don't know anything enough about it," or, "I'm not interested in politics" (ie I'm superior to you), are just avoiding the responsibility of members of society in a democratic country to choose their own government.

They would be free to put a blank paper into the box, but they ought not to be free to avoid their citizen's duty in a democratic society just because it is inconvenient to face up to their own indolence, ignorance or irresponsibility.
COUNCILLOR MARTIN KYRLE
Eastleigh, Hampshire

Sir: John Burridge is wrong (letter, 5 May). Voting can be made compulsory without infringing the right of the individual to make his



dissatisfaction by not voting.

This could be achieved by adding a simple "No Confidence" option to the ballot paper. Individuals could make a definite statement on the choices on offer without being forced to spoil their papers or stay at home.
STEVE RUDLAND
London SW19

Chosen by race for the Cabinet

Sir: I note with some interest your correspondent Polly Tynbee's opinion (5 May) that all political appointments to the Cabinet should be made not on the grounds of ability but on the basis of the minister's country of origin. "Less attractive is the presence of so many Scots. They occupy a third of the Cabinet yet only 8 per cent of the population live in Scotland." The 8 per cent she refers to should only entitle the Scots to one whole Cabinet minister and a bit of one other. Perhaps Ms Tynbee will enlighten us as to which ministers should be driven out of office on the grounds of their race.
RICHARD PATERNON
Bristol

Sir: Stephen Goodwin (report, 3 May) notes the "bizarre" situation facing the Conservative Party of having an MP who represents an English constituency acting as shadow Scottish Secretary. Strange – the same thing has been going on for years in Northern Ireland and no one seems to have taken a blind bit of notice.
GABRIEL DOHERTY
Department of History

Keep a copy of Elgin Marbles

Sir: Would it not be possible for a copy of the Elgin Marbles to be made, to be displayed in this country, while the originals were returned to Greece? Holography and modern computer analysis should make it no more difficult than the copying of the Grinling Gibbons carvings at Hampton Court.

Making such a copy would still be a major, and very expensive, undertaking and the celebration of its achievement would to some extent compensate for the sacrifice we would have made in giving up the originals. Returning the carvings would be an act of generosity which would be appreciated all over Europe. It would be more appropriate to an outward-looking government than the rather mean-minded response of the just-appointed Heritage Secretary to the Greek appeal.
PLIGHTMAN
Surrey, Surrey

Anzac Day games

Sir: Your article "Anzacs declare war on the Dirty Digger" (25 April) contains inaccuracies about News Corporation and our associated companies, Super League and Fox Studios Australia.

Your correspondent describes the Anzac Day Super League Test as an "Anzac Test". Neither the Returned Services League nor

Super League attempted to glorify footballers by comparing them to soldiers. The match took place in the evening, well after the Cenotaph memorial services.

For some 30 years Anzac Day has been less a day of solemnity than one of commemoration. Football matches of all codes, race meetings and other games now feature prominently.

Your correspondent also misrepresents the action before the Supreme Court of New South Wales. This issue is between the Save the Showground for Sydney group and the NSW government. Neither Fox Studios Australia nor News Corporation is a party.

The Royal Show decided in 1988 that it would leave the site at Moore Park. The NSW government's agreement to proceed with negotiations with Fox to develop studio facilities on the site began six years later. Far from destroying the heritage of the site, the Fox Studios complex will preserve most of the existing structures.
GERALDINE PATON
Director, Corporate Affairs
News Limited, Surry Hills,
New South Wales, Australia

Boateng's Britain

Sir: Special congratulations are due to Paul Boateng MP on his appointment as Britain's first black minister – another welcome sign that Tony Blair will govern for all Britain's people.
NICK BENT
Hale, Cheshire

Purist anger over formula milk

Sir: Laudable as their aims undoubtedly are, the current divisions in the ranks of the National Childbirth Trust over sponsorship by Sainsbury's highlight the dangers of a ruthlessly purist approach to what is essentially a practical issue.

My partner and I had our first baby 10 months ago, fully intending that she should breast-feed. In the first two weeks, however, things did not go according to plan, and it took the combined efforts of a breastfeeding counsellor and formula milk from Sainsbury's to see our baby safely through those early days and on to nine months of happy breast-feeding. Now my partner has returned to full-time work, formula milk again provides the only practical way to feed our son.

The Trust should not castigate supermarkets for stocking an essential item for millions of families. Its aim should be to achieve a society in which breast-feeding is a normal, everyday activity, and not one in which women and their babies have to secrete themselves in public toilet cubicles to avoid disapproving looks. In the meantime, ironically, supermarkets (and I do not single out Sainsbury's) provide some of the most comfortable facilities for families to breast-feed outside the home.
STEVE HICKMAN
Wokingham,
Berkshire

Don't ask us to mourn for Tories

Sir: I am compelled to reply to Tristan Garel-Jones's plea for sympathy towards the routed Tories ("That's politics, but it hurts", 5 May) to explain why I find it impossible to oblige.

When my husband and I lost our business and were forced to make 25 people redundant five years ago, at the height of the Tory-led recession – funny, I don't remember Mr Garel-Jones or his friends sparing us any thoughts. We, too, had given our all to our business and our employees and then had everything we had worked for snatched away from us overnight.

Did Ken Clarke feel a pang of anything when we had to pack our belongings into a van and leave our much-loved home? I think not.

When we found ourselves, as grandparents, having reared a family responsibly and without ever being a burden to the country, suffering the ignominy of signing on and claiming Income Support, how much sympathy do you think we received from the then Government? Not a lot.

As Mr Garel-Jones says, "middle-aged, past their best, accustomed to a demanding but zany way of life" – yes we can identify with that. And, yes, it hurts like hell. We, too, had a mortgage, a son still at school and a large debt to the bank.

So, I am sure you will understand when I say I feel that justice is now being seen to be done.
Mrs LINDA M COCKSHAW
Salisbury

Socratic road to political wisdom

Sir: Further to the suggestion that philosophy should be taught in schools, and to Nicolas Walter's response (letter, 5 May) that such education would reduce participation in the democratic process, a distinction needs to be drawn between possible approaches to the teaching of philosophy.

It is true that presenting to students the self-defeating scepticism of much modern philosophy would lead to the cynicism which is increasingly apparent in voting statistics. But if teachers were to return to the ancient philosophers, the effect would be the reverse: for the great philosophers of antiquity such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and Porphyry thought that their task was to address the perennial problems which beset human beings in their attempt to live the just life and to obtain happiness.

In Plato's *Republic* it is pointed out that the attractions of the life of the mind would discourage true philosophers from participating in political affairs. But Socrates has shown that a fine will be levied upon all those who have approached wisdom and will not enter politics – the fine of being ruled by ignorant men – and that will ensure that philosophers will indeed fulfil their political duty for their country.

The greatest good we could offer our school children is the confidence and encouragement to pursue wisdom.
TIM ADDEY
Frome, Somerset

Old speech of New England

Sir: Serena Mackesy writes: "If we ever went to war with the States, all we'd have to do to spot their spies would be to get everyone to read out the word 'Leominster'." (In my week, 3 May). Well, she would then miss the very people whose forebears started the process of opting out of the then British Empire: the citizens of Massachusetts and other New England states.

There is a town by the name of Leominster (Leh-minster) and a Worcester (Wooster) in the state, and New Englanders laugh about the "hicks" from further west who don't know how to pronounce them.
T M PICK
Budapest,
Hungary

Manager sacked

Sir: Today's leading article (6 May) suggests that John Major spent "too much time governing and not enough campaigning". It would be nearer the mark to say that he spent too much time managing and not enough governing. And while this may have produced an economy in reasonable shape it did not produce the sense of purpose and leadership which characterise good democratic government and to which electorates respond. This directly contributed to the scale of the Conservative Party's defeat – a fact which Conservative MPs will doubtless bear in mind when selecting a successor to Mr Major.
ANDREW CLIFFE
Tel: 0171 451 3500

essay

A soap-box in cyberspace

Britain has a long tradition of open-air speaking, often in the face of police harassment. Now, in the age of the sound-bite, the voice of democratic debate is muted by TV. But the spirit of the outdoor rhetorician survives on the superhighway, says Heathcote Williams

In these media-saturated times, it is hard to cast an overloaded mind back to the genteel bleakness of England in the Fifties and early Sixties. There was but one television channel – a hazy, flickering black-and-white parish pump, devoutly unifying an increasingly sedentary country with transmissions of *Come Dancing*. The finer points of human relationships were left to a flutulent soap-opera, *Crossroads*, set in a Birmingham motel; and *Panorama* would occasionally address a controversial theme with an anaesthetic pomposity.

The electronic curfew had begun. As the battery-chicken dwelling-units – the tower blocks – penetrated the heavens that no one was inclined to believe in any more, so the old communities on the ground disappeared, and the spectral pseudo-communities of the airwaves arose in their place, as if to compensate for their loss.

In Hyde Park, however, there was an alternative station: destined never to be tied to the subtle blackmail of advertisers, and free from the encroaching royalty-mongering of the BBC. On Saturday evening, all day Sunday, and Sunday night, you could surf 20 or 30 flesh-and-blood transmissions for as long as your legs would stand it, and for as long as the cardboard-flavoured tea from the pagoda-shaped tea stand would keep warming your bones.

Here were the germinative and liberating tribunes of what was shortly to become the "underground", the alternative society. The messages from this alternative parliament were avidly downloaded by incipient subversives. There simply wasn't anywhere else, or anything else like it.

The hand-cranked broadcasts took place on a windswept piece of tarmac at the end of the plutocratic purlieus of Park Lane. The programme planners were no more than the muses of human inspiration – encouraging the raw articulation of anyone who felt like standing on a battered tea-chest, an overturned bucket, or, occasionally, a customised stand to air their views and to let them

run the gauntlet in a grass-roots ratings war between rival speakers.

The speakers had to be resilient, and physically fit. They could be attacked, sometimes hurled from the platform; they were half drowned out by traffic noise; and at each deep oratorical inhalation they took in volumes of lead-polluted fumes.

They were constrained by the Hyde Park bye-laws from collecting money in the park, so that those who depended upon speaking for a livelihood were starved out; and they all had to suffer the officious scrutiny of the police in case their speeches contained seditious or blasphemous material. Even the most mildly disrespectful reference to a member of the Royal Family could result in immediate arrest and confinement in the special police station that served Speakers' Corner.

The Royals were still an untouchable totem in a deeply class-ridden society. Hyde Park was officially a "royal park", and it most particularly offended the powers that be to have the Royals insulted there. This was the archaic reason invariably given by Marylebone magistrates as to why collections could not be taken in Hyde Park. The offence of an itinerant wordsmith, who was vulgar enough to ask for a donation at the end of a meeting, was construed as a form of lese-majesté. Had he not subversively sung for his doubtless subversive supper not a stone's throw from the alienating splendour of Buckingham Palace, whose cosseted inhabitants would be dining in comfort, secure in the knowledge that the Royal Parks police were arresting anyone unwise enough to beg on the Royals' patch.

All these strictures, as Stephen Coleman points out in his engrossing new book, *Silled Tongues*, were echoes of ancient and much more extreme injunctions against free speech in a mandarin society – a society that thought freedom of speech might happily be permitted to adorn the port-stained lips of gentlemen in their clubs, but should be watered down for the man in the street, in case it proved a more pro-active blessing.

In December 1656, the House of Commons debated for several days whether or not to bore a hole through the tongue of the pacifist Quaker James Naylor. They decided to do so and then had it done. It was disclosed that Naylor's voluble tongue had been unrestrained enough to preach that "God was against the covetous cruel oppressors who grind the faces of the poor and needy", and it had been seditious enough to proclaim that God, the celestial democrat, had "made all men of one mould and one blood to dwell on the face of the earth".

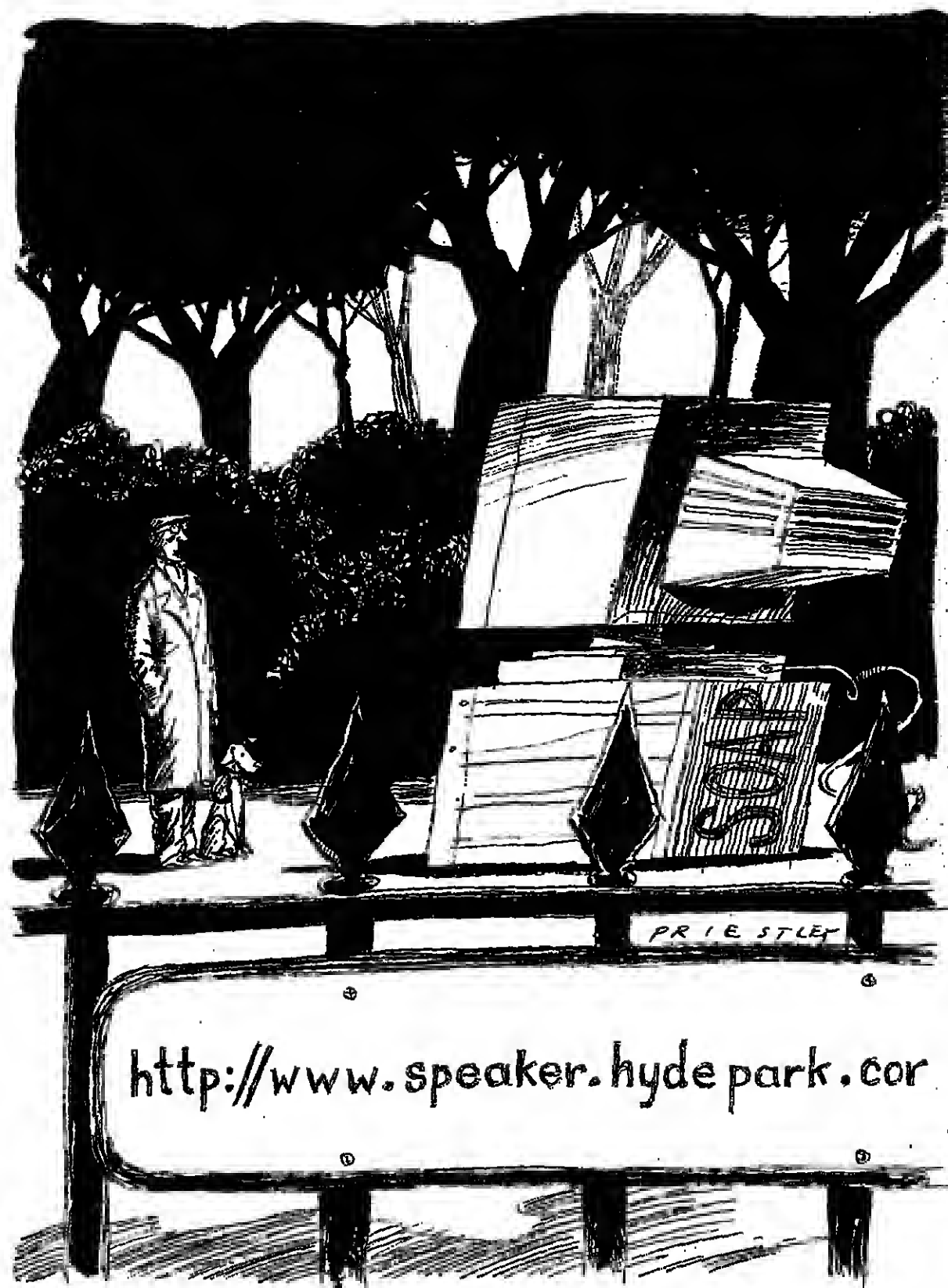
At present, when freedom of speech has become a commodity in the gift of media monopolies, it is forgotten how great the contribution of open-air speaking has been to extending the "limits of the expressible", in Chomsky's phrase.

The outdoor rhetorician may nowadays be seen as risibly anachronistic; the idea of carrying a hefty and unmanageable speaker's platform – replete with steps and display panel – on and off a bus, on and off the Tube, ill contrasts with the cosiness of a hospitality suite in a studio, where the interviewee may field-test his latest sound-bite with a pampering make-up artist, unlikely to heckle, and whose powder and make-up brushes are less threatening than the night-sticks of the police prowling the park on the look-out for the trigger-words of sedition.

It is of course much neater and much tidier to have people who may wish to give vent to anything disturbing boxed up in a cube, like Damien Hirst's sheep. Disembodied, nicked away inside what is, after all, only a piece of inanimate furniture that people have got into the habit of staring at, or even worshipping as if it were a techno-Shinto shrine. But there is no interaction. You cannot heckle a goldfish bowl.

William Morris regarded the outdoor meeting as being of paramount value in communicating opinion, and deeply resented the bourgeois fetish of tidiness, so obsequiously enforced by the police. He commented on their "arrogant petty tyranny" and decried the fact that, "They would clear the streets of costermongers, organs, processions and lecturers of all kinds, and make them a sort of decent prison corridors, with people just trudging to and from their work."

Now, thanks to a demonic consumerism, the street as meeting place, the street as open university, the street as festival, are all brushed aside once more in deference to the monocultural street reduced to an extended assembly-line for conspicuous consumption. The street is transmuted and conquered by the automobile, whose pollution of the body politic is much more lethal than the exhortations of even the most mis-



guided street "lecturer" who ever threatened the Queen's peace.

The traffic of the mind that took place on numberless street corners has been supplanted, squeezed out of existence by the upholstered traffic of impervious people in cocooned and carciogenic pods, who watch *Friends* and *Neighbours* but do not know who lives next door.

"Reclaim the streets", of course, valiantly embraces this tradition in defiance of the "arrogant petty tyranny" as embodied in the Criminal Justice Act, and the neutering of public gatherings. None the less, it requires a considerable leap of the imagination to visualise London as it was between the wars, in the days of the great anarchist speaker, Bonar Thompson. Sean O'Casey's protégé.

These were the venues available for an itinerant speaker, such as Bonar Thompson: Highbury Corner, Finsbury Park, Brockwell Park, Victoria Park, Peckham Rye, Clapham Common, Parliament Hill Fields, Jack Straw's Castle, Hampstead, the World's End, Chelsea, Jolly Butcher's, Hill Wood Green, Beresford Square, Woodwich, Golden Square, Soho, Catherine Street, Croydon, and Howland Street, off Tottenham Court Road, in addition to Tottenham Hill and Marble Arch. There were legions more throughout the country: the Bull Ring in Birmingham, Glasgow Green, Bigg Market in Newcastle, to name but a few.

Michael Foot declared himself an "addict" of Bonar Thompson, and "in the midst of the strident ideological confusions which abounded in the 1930s," he came to believe that "Bonar Thomp-

son's scepticism was, I suppose, the sanest thing in the land."

Thompson's pacifist war cry was: "Half the misery in the world is caused by ignorance. The other half is caused by knowledge." He was a fierce opponent of militarism and would say, with provocative relish, immediately after the First World War: "When a monarch, or president, a premier or other national leader announces that he will fight to the death, he is generally in dead earnest. He is referring, of course, not to his own death, but yours."

Donald Soper, still speaking at the age of 84, took up the pacifist cudgels in the Second World War, courageously enduring the beating of uniformed soldiers on leave. (On one occasion, in mid-sentence, the Bible was blown out of his hand by the blast from an incendiary bomb.)

Coleman conveys a sense that these men and women, rather than just blowing in the wind, were fine-tuning the cogs and balances of social cohesion – and in the majority of cases they were doing it for free (unlike the grasping TV gurus and guru-ettes of push-button la-la-land). His freelance orators revitalised the *Zeitgeist* with their insights – they were often martyred for so doing – and because what they were saying was spontaneous and impassioned, it remained in the mind for far, far longer, giving the audience the feeling that they were present at a unique and unrepeatable event. They couldn't catch it again on video.

Hyde Park was, and is, man speaking in tongues, speaking in the wilderness; the Sermon on the Mount, the trickster,

the fanatic, the holy fool. By contrast the Palace of Westminster is the democratic Vatican. Both strands are of equal importance but there have been 18 years of viral attack on the communities. All hands are required on deck.

Dr Stephen Coleman is the director of the Hansard Scholars programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Not unhelpfully by his own background as a long-term observer of Hyde Park in action, he is now instrumental, with others, in bringing "armchair mavericks and eccentric ideologues" and anyone else who cares to participate, out into the open through "UK Citizens On-Line Democracy" (<http://www.democracy.org.uk>), which is, in effect, a virtual People's Parliament, where the rough and tumble of the hustings can be incarnated in cyberspace, and where those old, urgent voices long stifled by vehicle traffic, may be heard once more on the information superhighway – a virtual parliament, which could, if accessible enough, turn into an ongoing deliberative democracy broadening "public space" to high-on infinite proportion.

Elitists and dyed-in-the-wool Ludites alike will be aghast; but, if nothing else, the great Web differs from Colbert's great Wen in that it remains mercifully, anarchically, and perhaps even devilishly unresponsive to the devilish talons of the media moguls who have all been obliged to retreat from cyberspace, their greedy claws blunted by frustration.

Silled Tongues: from soapbox to soundbite by Stephen Coleman (Porcupine Press, £8.95).

1 June 1997
Trent Park to Knebworth

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Snow in May? Just go with the flow

It is about 5am, on Tuesday, I have woken up early, for some inexplicable reason. But I never wake up early. So why have I woken up early on 6 May at 5am?

No matter. To get myself back to sleep, I try to think of something to worry about, and for some reason I think of my son's project at school. This term his class is doing "rivers" as their project. They are learning all they can about rivers, and how these vast bodies of water begin life as small springs in the mountains and end up as major sources of the salaries of directors of water companies...

As we live beside a River Avon, I feel my nine-year-old may already know something about rivers, so I asked him the other day what he knew about the River Avon.

He said he knew that Avon was the Welsh word for river, and that River Avon just means "River River", which was pretty impressive, until I realised that he got this from me and that it is the only thing he knows about the River Avon, so I have tried to

increase his river knowledge by taking him to the Claverton Pumping Station. This is an installation on the Avon near Bath which pumps water 40 feet up into the Kennet and Avon Canal from the River Avon, and the extraordinary thing about the pumping station is that it uses *only the force of the river to drive the pump*. No other motive power – no engine, no fuel – was ever envisaged, apart from the huge water mill-wheel which to this day can be driven by the weight of water to fill the canal.

It is a wonderful sight. Even my son was quite impressed by the size of the wheel, though rather more impressed by the range of souvenirs and sweets on sale. It is at this point that a cockerel crows very close by. This explains why I have woken up, and started worrying about rivers. I have been woken by the cockerel.

But this is strange in itself, as there is no cockerel living within a mile of our home, so I go to the window to look out and to my amazement there is a jug of milk on the window sill covered in snow. In a flash I wake up. I am not at home at all. I am



Miles Kingston

staying at the West Arms at Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog in North Wales, where we have gone on Bank Holiday Monday to visit my step-mother. There is a jug of milk on the window sill because my wife likes to keep some fresh milk cool for the morning cup of tea and had put it out the night before. The milk is covered with snow because it is snowing hard.

We have also come here – clever, this – to visit the nearby Pistyll Rhaiadr, which is the tallest waterfall in Britain.

Why is this clever? Because my son is doing a project on rivers.

Meanwhile, it is snowing thickly. On 6 May 1997, at 6am. When my son wakes up and sees it, he gets dressed quickly and drags me outside to have a snow fight, as if he has never seen snow before in his life. Well, he has seen snow before, on odd occasions, but there are plenty of others about that have never seen snow before. There are lambs in the field up the road who are saying to their mothers, "What is this horrible-tasting white stuff?" There is a pair of pheasants in the field looking pretty puzzled. And there is, even more oddly, a swallow sitting on the telephone line outside the West Arms, clearly saying to himself: "I left Egypt for THIS?"

It is 6 May, on a bright morning in North Wales, five months after Christmas, days after the fall of the Tory government, and I am up to my knees in snow in a field rolling a huge snowball with my son. What has gone wrong?

My son clearly thinks that nothing has gone wrong, because he forms a large snowball like a baker taking a lump of dough and aims it

somewhere in my direction and flukily hits the area between my chin and my collar.

"Now, that is very interesting, Adam," I tell him. "You see, it explains how rivers form. That snowball will melt in the warmth of my body, and it will flow down my clothes joining with other melted snowballs until it forms a small stream which will flow out on the ground and finally make its way down to the sea, and do you know what that means?"

"No," says my son. "What does it mean?"

"It means you are doomed to death by snowball!" I cry, advancing on him with as many snowballs as I can hold, watched by a slightly puzzled group of sheep and pheasants.

Later we find that the track to Pistyll Rhaiadr is probably too slushy to risk, so we never do get to see the highest waterfall in Britain and go and see my step-mother instead and we learn nothing about rivers from her, but I would like to put it on record that on 6 May 1997 I had to scrape snow off a jug of milk to get a cup of tea.

سكنا من الامم

Seize the moment or rue the day, Prime Minister

Cromwell said "You must not only strike while the iron is hot. You must also make the iron hot by striking." The landslide that occurred last Thursday has changed more than any of us dared to imagine, the whole landscape of our politics. Britain seems a different place now. The air of expectation of change is almost tangible.

The temptation for opposition parties, as Parliament returns today, is to leave change to the Government and wait for the dust to settle. But this would be to risk losing the moment and its potential.

The Conservatives will be distracted and disabled by their internal squabbles for some time to come. But the rest of us do not have to wait for them.

In our most successful election campaign since the 1920s, the Liberal Democrats have played a key role not only in sweeping out a discredited government, but also in creating a climate for change. We must now be prepared to play our part in that change.

Our successes have given us a clear mandate to fight for investment in education and in our health service, for a new environmental agenda, democratic renewal and for a more rational, less confrontational and more honest approach to politics. These will be our priorities in the new Parliament.

Mr Blair now has the overwhelming good will of the nation behind him. And that will, too, is for change – fundamental change to the way we do things in our politics and in our society. This could be – should be – a government to match those of 1906 and 1945; one which opens the way to a great decade of reform (it cannot be done in less) to modernise the way Britain works: from our system of government, to our relations with our neighbours, to the way we organise our society and welfare system. And if that is what Mr Blair intends to make it, then the Liberal Democrats will provide critical but firm support for every step he takes in that direction.

We could start immediately by moving to a less adversarial and more constructive and rational basis for our politics in the House of Commons. If Mr Blair intends to change the way the Government behaves, then, again, we will respond by seeking to change the way the Opposition behaves, too.

This will not only improve our politics as they are. It will also prepare the way for our politics as I hope they will become.

It is not to diminish Mr Blair's achievement to note that, for all Labour's huge majority, he still enjoys the support of only 44 per cent of voting Britain. A system that can produce a landslide to sweep a government in on a minority of the vote can sweep it out on a minority of the vote, too. We will need more stable foundations than this to sustain the full decade of reform necessary to complete the modernisation of Britain.

The single most crucial decision that Labour and the Liberal Democrats have agreed to implement in this Parliament is a referendum on proportional representation. If this is won and implemented before the next election, the firm foundations will be laid for a historic period of change which begins with Parliament's return today. If not, this could just as easily be merely another bright dawn, as illusory as all those we have seen before.

It will be much easier to win the case for PR in that referendum if the co-operative politics



by Paddy Ashdown

This could be a government to modernise the way Britain works and if that is so, the Liberal Democrats will provide critical but firm support

that PR will entrench is already seen to be working and producing results. So first, we must begin without delay the work agreed by Robert Maclean and Robin Cook before the election on constitutional change; in particular, the early establishment of the Commission on Electoral Reform.

If, as I believe, this can quickly reach a conclusion on an alternative, proportional system broadly supported by both parties – but especially by Mr Blair himself – then the relationship between the Liberal Democrats and Labour will be the most important relationship in British politics for the next 10 or 15 years. The foundations upon which a programme for the full modernisation of Britain can safely be built will have been laid. And the Conservatives will have all the time in the world to try to struggle back to decent one-nation Conservatism, in opposition.

If, for lack of personal commitment, courage or competence, the two parties fail in this project, then this will be just another new government, with another new programme. We will become just another Opposition, opposing them. And the Conservatives, armed with a right-wing agenda and under a right-wing leader, will probably – sooner rather than later – sweep back by the very system that has just swept them away.

If, between us, we lose this moment, it may not come again for a generation.

So Liberal Democrats stand ready to play our part in securing real change in this Parliament. We will strenuously oppose those things the Government does that we think are wrong. We will be a scourge for extra investment in education and for facing up to the crisis in the National Health Service. We will support Scottish devolution, as we have always done, but oppose Labour's damaging decision to have a second question on tax-raising powers in their referendum.

We will be implacable in protecting individual liberties against any repeat of Labour's cavalier disregard for these, in the face of the Howard Bills before the election. We will certainly expect early action to see a Bill of Rights incorporated into British law. We will press for a long-term approach and oppose short-term gimmicks, of which we saw too many during the election. We will not let Labour ignore the environment, as they did in their election campaign, and we will not hesitate to push them to get off the fence on Europe and provide them with support against their own Eurosceptics when they do.

There will be other areas where we can support them, too. For instance, we have long believed in strengthening the independence of the Bank of England in order to cut down low inflation, and we will support the Government in this now that Gordon Brown has announced his intention to implement this policy. We will support initiatives to raise education standards, while insisting that these are backed by resources.

And in some areas we should be prepared to break with convention and tradition if these stand in the way of more sensible co-operation. Constitutional reform is one clear case for such an approach. Welfare reform, Northern Ireland, and perhaps even Europe could be others.

Last Thursday's vote delivered a mandate for real change in Britain. We must keep the iron hot by striking it.

Flash Gordon gets off to a flying start

by Donald Macintyre

Gordon Brown, like his leader, was never much interested in opposition. Since 1994, this restless, driven man has brooded about only two things – how to win the election and what to do with victory once in the Treasury. It isn't surprising, therefore, that he was ready to be Chancellor.

Even given the natural tendency of officials to say flattering things about their new masters, the most senior ones at the Treasury seem genuinely struck by how instantaneously he settled into the job.

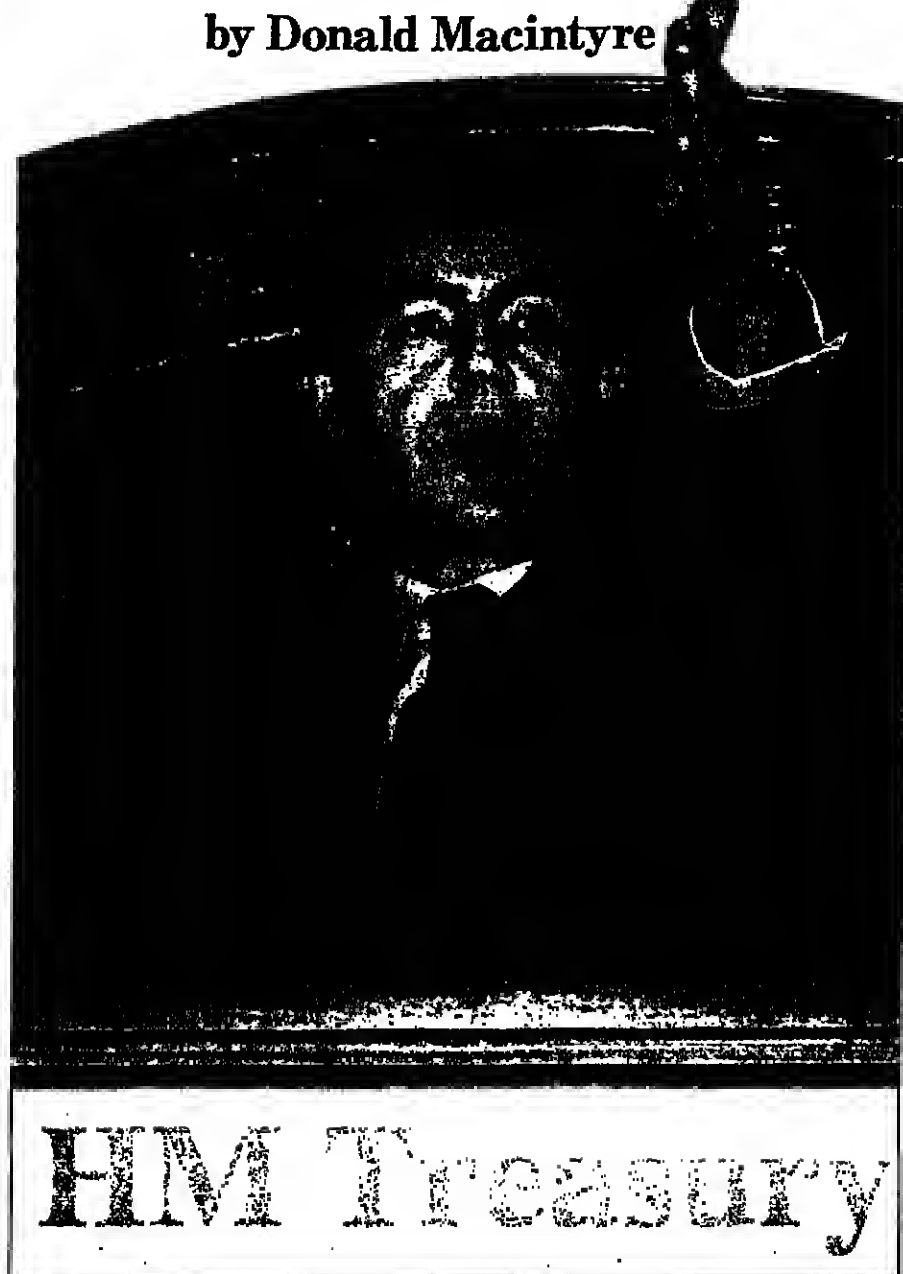
All around Whitehall, little tremors indicate the culture shock that comes with the dawn of a new era – incoming, campaign-hardened Labour fixers horrified at how few civil servants carry what they regard as the obligatory papers and mobile telephones, newly-appointed ministers unsure of where even their departments are, let alone their new offices, the hilarious day-long quest by officials that nearly ended in appointing the obscure left-wing Scottish backbencher Brian Donohoe instead of Lord (Bernard) Donoghue as Agriculture Minister of State.

At the Treasury, therefore, it was striking how smooth – relatively – the transition was. No, here the shock was quite different. What no one had expected before polling day was that Brown would make such a difference so early.

A few days and an era ago, the most fashionable, worldly-weary complaint was that you wouldn't notice a Labour government, that it would be the same old policies without the same old faces. Brown, visibly relaxed after the dreadful tensions of a six-week election campaign, yesterday exploded that myth. We may not yet know much about the Blair government, but we can never say again that it isn't going to do anything new.

Normally, when a politician says of an institution, as the new Chancellor said yesterday of the Bank of England, that he is going to subject it "to the most radical internal reform since it was founded in 1694", it has the unconvincing ring of politician's hyperbole. Yesterday, it didn't. It would have been scarcely excessive if he had also claimed to have transformed, within five days of becoming Chancellor, more than 300 years of political economy. By taking a giant leap towards full independence of the Bank of England, Brown has abandoned, probably forever, the historic right of politicians to indulge in short-term manipulation of monetary policy.

It became almost boring in the long run-up to the general election to hear Brown satirising the "Ken and Eddie" show, and holding out the distant, seeming prospect of a restructured, quasi-independent Bank. Watching him announce that yesterday's quarter-point interest rate rise was the last to be decided by the Chancellor of



In one sweep Chancellor Gordon Brown has transformed 300 years of political economy and manipulation of the Bank of England

the Exchequer, and that from next month rates would be fixed by the Bank alone, was, by contrast, electrifying.

The steps leading to the announcement were appropriately dramatic; the meeting with the Governor was brought forward by a day because the legislation on the Bank had to be agreed at yesterday's Cabinet Committee deciding the contents of the Queen's Speech setting out the Labour programme. Such a market-sensitive decision could not be left dangerously unannounced for a day in case it leaked – though the signs are that the new Government may be rather good at keeping secrets. The move, perhaps the most far-reaching change to the economic policy-making process for half a century, was put to Treasury officials on Friday, finally agreed between Chancellor and Prime Minister at

Blair's Islington home on Sunday, agreed with the Governor on Monday, and was never leaked.

The Chancellor's announcement that he needed a quarter per cent rise to correct inflationary drift was forgivably a little more dramatic than it needed to be. It's a safe bet that his Tory predecessor, Ken Clarke, would have done the same if not this month, then certainly the next. Nor did Brown choose yesterday explicitly to criticise Clarke for resisting, over many months, the advice of the Governor to raise interest rates.

It is probable, of course, that a Conservative Chancellor would always have been given more freedom by the markets to second-guess the Bank than a Labour one. But even with Clarke, there is an irony. On the one hand, Clarke built his reputation as Chancellor in part on his ability to second-guess the Governor's caution and get away with it; on the other, he more than any of his ex-Cabinet colleagues had been prepared, in the long term, to sacrifice his rights to do that by surrendering them to the European Central Bank that will be responsible for fixing rates under a single currency.

But it has been Brown who has now handed on that right, in

the interests, as he emphasised yesterday, of the long-term battle against inflation. In the short term, it's probable that, given the Bank's instinctive tendency towards monetary prudence, there is at the very least another rates increase in the pipeline. That will not unduly worry Gordon Brown because he has never once flinched from his view that Labour has to reverse its fatal habit of courting short-term popularity and then paying for it later, as it did when the IMF were called in in 1976. This may yet have implications for fiscal policy, and for the Chancellor's first budget, as for monetary policy.

There was a fascinating exchange on April 29 between Brown and Blair, reported in the writer Robert Harris's inside account of the election campaign. It describes how press questions would be fielded on the planned July budget. Blair tells Brown: "You should say that the only reason you're holding the budget is to introduce welfare to work." Brown, reports Harris, is anxious not to commit himself. "Blair is politely insistent. Brown concedes." This is only pre-election talk, of course, but it could just be that Brown, who yesterday recommended himself unequivocally next month to reducing VAT on fuel to five per cent – also wants a balanced package including, say, the abolition of mortgage interest tax relief or some other form of revenue raising, and that Blair has not to be persuaded that it would be wise.

In yesterday's *Independent*, the economist Gavin Davies, who could well fill a new deputy governor post at the Bank, sounded caution against the long-term electoral damage that such tax rises could yet inflict. But there are those who believe that Brown is not so sure as Davies that such rises should be avoided.

But that's for the future. Yesterday's stroke could not have been bolder. Blair and Brown have several ways of reassuring those who believe that every economic objective will now be sacrificed to the attack on inflation. First, the remit to the Bank includes the 1944 Beveridge objective of stable growth and full employment. Second, four of the members of its monetary policy committee will be Government appointees. Third, the Bank will have to answer to the House of Commons for its decisions. At a stroke, Labour has laid a historic claim to the high ground of economic virtue. That, in its own way, is as stunning a turn round as the election result itself.

informative:

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How will Labour deal with real life?

Forget the landslide – Mr Blair's team must cope with the global changes that will affect us all

"When this election of yours is over," a Norwegian university professor has just written to me. "I hope your paper will broaden its mind a bit again... okay, of course politics matters, but it sure matters less than your current coverage indicates. Write more about gene technology, the Internet and other processes that will change the way we live. Tony Blair won't. All right he will, a little."

It is always good to see ourselves as others see us, but I am particularly grateful to the Norwegian professor for pointing out the limits of politics at this particular time. There is such an expectation of change, and such a element of (albeit understandable) glee among Labour supporters that we need people to remind us that the election of Tony Blair will only change our lives a little.

How much depends on the extent to which he, and the people round about him, understand these big forces for change, and then whether they channel shape their policies to channel and use them, or resist and challenge them. Do you lean with the wind, or do you spit into it? Try this test. Let's list five of these forces, the processes that will change the way we live, and see to what



Hamish McRae

extent New Labour's ideas do dovetail with them.

Start with the rising power of global finance. That power has been climbing for the best part of two decades, so New Labour has had plenty of time to come to terms with it, but Gordon Brown managed to take the markets by surprise yesterday by pushing ahead more quickly than they had expected with the plan to give the Bank of England freedom to set interest rates. This is simply taking further a series of reforms started by the previous Government, and merely brings the Bank to about the middle of the independence league rather than being a bit below it. So we are catching up rather than pushing ahead. Nevertheless, it is a

clear sign that politics are going with the flow of economics. Score: Plus.

Next, take the changes taking place in the world labour market: greater competition from workers abroad, the shift towards self-employment, part-time working, job growth in smaller companies and so on. Here, the new policy is the application of the European social chapter. The changes in the labour market have undoubtedly created great social tensions, in particular the conflict between the insiders – people who have good jobs and want to keep them, and the outsiders – people who are unemployed, or underemployed and would like to do better.

The problem here is that the Government is adopting an old-fashioned social model, one invented the best part of a decade ago in a quite different economic environment, and one which has subsequently been discredited as increasing the gap between insiders and outsiders. The practical reality may be that the new Government had no option but to sign up, and it may well be that it will start to develop a more appropriate model in the coming years. But so far, the score is for a minus.

Number three is demography, the ageing of the devel-

oped world. This will lead to a series of changes in both our economies and our social attitudes. Our economics, there is the obvious practical need to establish adequate pension provision as well as bringing about other changes such as making it easier for older people to do part-time work. Here, the appointment of Frank Field, perhaps the most thoughtful politician in the country on this subject, to think long-term about pensions is a clear sign that the new Government grasps the significance of the problem. Score: Plus.

Will the Government also be sensitive to the shifts in social attitudes that an older world will generate? Harder to say, but I rather think so. It may seem odd to suggest that the youngest prime minister this century will be able to act as a channel for older values, but in a way New Labour seems to represent these values better than old Tory. We will see: no score, just a point to watch.

Four – technology and in particular communications technology, for the rapid advances there will be the main impact on the world through the next five years. (Sure, biotechnology is enormously important too, but I think the practical consequences of

advances there will not be making a major impact on our lives in the next 10 years – it is the decade beyond that.)

The revolution in telecommunications is not just a result of the Internet, though that is a key part of it. It is also slashing prices of telecommunications world-wide and transferring knowledge even more rapidly across the world. There is also a surge in global TV channels, growth in international trade in on-screen white-collar services, and so on.

What do governments do about this? The short answer is "let it happen". This is an area of economic development that has to be bottom-up rather than top-down, for we can only see what will win from the market signals. The UK starts from the advantage of a liberal telecommunications regime, and that will presumably continue. Presumably, too, the general tone of the Government will be "technology-friendly". Whether it realises that this technology is immensely liberating in that people no longer need to be here, or indeed anywhere in particular, is another matter.

The location of on-screen jobs is going to be one of the great areas of economic competition over the next five years, much more important than,

say, the location of car assembly plants. Do they understand this? Do they realise that even the great on-screen money-making machine of the financial services industry could be challenged from abroad? It is not yet possible to score this one, but watch it closely.

Finally, education. More than any other single input, the quality of human capital will determine economic success – and, I guess, social success, too. But the lags are very long. Only one 40th of the workforce turns over each year, so while the key to the very long-term future may lie in the nursery schools, the key to the next decade lies in patching gaps in people's education and "retrofitting" us with new skills. Does New Labour grasp this, or does it still think of education in terms of schools and universities? Score? Again, we just don't know.

What we do know is that these forces will march on. The total score above is a couple of pluses, a minus, and a lot of don't knows. Our lives will, a decade from now, be very different for reasons which have nothing to do with politics. Some aspects will be worse than today, but fortunately there will still be some politicians upon whom we can – wholly unfairly – pin the blame.

Family Healthcare	111,926	41,775	Scottish Widows Mixed	524.1	504.4
Foreign Portfolio Managed	306.6	306.6	Standard Life	1,982.7	1,468.0
Friends Provident UK Equity	548.5	548.5	Standard Equity	210.9	221.8
Friends Provident UK Fixed	813.5	294.6	Standard European	170.8	170.8
Friends Provident With Profit	162.2	162.2	Standard Far East	485.0	485.0
General Accident With Profit	867.2	1,035.2	Standard Fixed Interest	808.1	945.4
GA Pure Mutual Eq. Ord	804.3	638.0	Standard Managed	1,231.1	1,235.9
GA Pure Mutual Ngl. Ord	374.0	363.9	Sun Alliance Equity	890.5	937.6
Geni Managed	1,391.1	1,454.3	Sun Alliance Managed		
GSE Equity Act.					

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Unit Trust Guide

business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-233 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

At last, independence for the Bank

Chancellor's move heralds cheaper long-term money

Diane Coyle
and Nic Cicutti

Gordon Brown's snap decision to grant the Bank of England its independence was greeted with amazement and delight by the financial markets yesterday.

The expected rise of a quarter point in base rates, to 6.25 per cent, added to the general City satisfaction. But home-owners will face higher mortgage costs as several big lenders increased their rates in reaction, raising the monthly cost of a home loan by about £13 for a typical £50,000 mortgage.

Share prices leapt to a new record, and the interest premium on British government debt fell by almost half a percentage point.

The Chancellor said the previous arrangements of monthly meetings between his predecessor and the Governor of the Bank of England had not generated enough confidence. "The perception that monetary policy decisions have been dominated by short-term political considerations has grown," he said.

He said the Bank would have the operational independence to set interest rates in order to achieve the inflation target. "I want British economic success to be built on the solid rock of prudent and consistent economic management, not the shifting sands of boom and bust," he said.

The FTSE 100 index climbed above 4,500 for the first time, ending nearly 64 points higher at 4,519.5. Giltsoared to their highest level for three years as the premium over German bunds declined sharply. In a less welcome response, the pound also moved higher, with the sterling index rising nearly a point to 100.6.

Most experts, in the City and outside, welcomed the Chancellor's decision. Economists said base rates might rise by more than they otherwise would in the short term, but long-term borrowing costs would be lower.

James Barry, an economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "It's a stroke of genius. It

has caught all of us in the markets on the hop."

Michael Hughes, head of research at BZW, said: "The Government has taken an important and long overdue step towards achieving the end of stabilising the economy."

David Currie, a professor at the London Business School and Labour peer, agreed: "This is a very important break with the past."

Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, was not surprisingly delighted. "We will not be distracted by political considerations. We are doing a technical job," he said.

Mr George, who revealed that he had learnt about the plan on Monday morning, said he would not have sought more

majority vote. The committee will consist of the Governor, his deputy, a new second deputy, two Bank executive directors, and four monetary experts appointed from outside the Bank.

These four will be Bank officials, although not necessarily full time. They will, however, have to give up all outside commercial interests.

The main concern City economists had about Mr Brown's move was whether these new appointments would be subject to political pressures. Simon Briscoe at Nikko Europe, said: "You could just get a range of Labour Party supporters making the judgement. That's not independence in any meaningful way."

The committee, whose membership will be announced as soon as possible, will be accountable to the Treasury Select Committee of the House of Commons. Gavin Davies, chief economist at Goldman Sachs and considered a front-runner for the new deputy governorship, said: "This is an incentive for the Treasury committee to get better. This will be the prime form of political accountability."

The Chancellor's decision to raise interest rates on the Bank's advice yesterday, overshadowed by the more dramatic move, gained a more muted reaction.

Mr Brown admitted that the strength of sterling meant there was a policy dilemma, and said the Government wanted a stable and competitive pound over the medium term.

Two surveys yesterday highlighted the dilemma. The monthly services indicator from the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply showed further strong growth in the sector leading to higher wage costs. But a CBI industrial survey showed that manufacturers in all but one region had had to cut their prices because the exchange rate was hitting export orders.

The increase in base rates will also hit home owners. Mortgage lenders reacted within hours by increasing their rates by an average of 0.35 per cent to about 7.6 per cent.



Chancellor rings the changes: Gordon Brown at the Treasury Photograph: Edward Sykes

The move was justified by lenders as being almost inevitable after months of deliberate keeping rates down.

Andrew Pople, managing director of the retail division at Abbey National, whose tiered rates rose by a similar amount, said: "An increase in base rates had been expected for some months... and the proposed independence for the Bank may mean that further base rate changes are possible in 1997."

But Mr Pople added that he did not foresee mortgage interest rate rises on the scale of the early 1990s during the present Labour administration.

The Halifax, which also raised the cost of its mortgages by 0.35 per cent, stressed the rates increase would be welcomed by millions of savers, who outnumber borrowers seven to one.

Mike Blackburn, chief executive at the Halifax, said: "We do not believe this increase will halt

the recovery. Mortgage rates are still at a relatively low level."

Coventry Building Society also joined other lenders in raising its rates. Northern Rock stressed the 6.09 per cent variable rates from its newly launched telephone arm would remain unchanged for the moment.

Mr Brown said: "We are setting out a framework to end the boom and bust instability of recent years."

Comment, page 21

Business chiefs welcome Brown's historic decision

Michael Harrison
and Chris Goddard

Business leaders yesterday welcomed Labour's historic move to grant the Bank of England independence in setting monetary policy although there was not universal support for the latest base rate rise.

Adair Turner, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, said he very much welcomed the decision describing it as "a useful move in an intelligent direction". In a statement, the employers' organisation added: "Business has pressed for month-to-month interest rate decisions to be clearly free of political influence. This move will enhance the credibility of the UK's monetary policy, and over time lower the cost of finance for industry by reducing the risk premium in UK interest rates."

The CBI said that the tightening in monetary policy represented by the quarter-point increase in interest rates was necessary against the background of strong consumer demand. However, it urged the Chancellor Gordon Brown to use his first budget to raise personal taxes, thus making further base rate rises less necessary.

"This policy mix would reduce the imbalance in fortunes at present between exporters, whose profits are being hit badly by a strong sterling and domestic service industries, where inflation pressures are increasing."

British Steel is expected to deliver a similar message to Gordon Brown later this week when it sets out its views on how to curb inflation. The company has been one of the hardest hit by the appreciation of sterling, every 10 pence rise against the German mark knocking £100m from its profits.

John Browne, chief executive of British Petroleum, the UK's largest company, echoed the feelings of many senior industrialists at the prospect of greater stability in economic policy making. "Clearly this is a good move. The track record of independent central banks in Europe is pretty good," he said.

The announcement added to Mr Brown's credibility with the

Institute of Directors, which had been less than enthusiastic about Labour before the election. Tim Melville-Ross, IoD director-general, said: "You can't accuse him of letting the grass grow under his feet." Despite the concern of IoD members dependent on the export trade Mr Melville-Ross said the interest rate rise was "about right".

He continued: "My only reservation about an independent central bank was removing all political control. But Mr Brown has answered that by having an inflation target set by Government. It's a pretty restricted freedom, though."

But exporters grappling with the strength of the pound, which has risen in value by 25 per cent over the past year, said the immediate outlook appeared even more bleak. Ironically the Engineering Employers' Federa-

You can't accuse [Gordon Brown] of letting the grass grow under his feet

tion (EEF) had written Gordon Brown yesterday morning, before the dramatic announcements, urging him to tighten economic policy through tax increases and spending cuts rather than interest rate hikes. The EEF feared that an independent bank would make the pound even stronger.

Jeremy Miller, EEF external affairs director, said: "Exchange rates are still affecting our members considerably. We'd rather he'd have taken a different measure than today's rate increase. If an independent bank makes the pound stronger then we are against it."

The House Builders' Federation attacked the rate rise, saying there was no evidence of widespread inflation in the housing market nor any serious risk of it in the immediate future.

DTI role for Lord Hollick

Michael Harrison

Lord Hollick, chief executive of United News and Media and one of Labour's most prominent business supporters, is set to be appointed special adviser to Margaret Beckett, the new President of the Board of Trade.

The media peer has long been a close confidante of the Prime Minister Tony Blair and was one of the handful of top executives chosen to promote Labour's Business Manifesto during the election campaign.

His appointment would invite comparison with the role that



Hollick: Set to be Margaret Beckett's special adviser

Lord Sterling, chairman of P&O, played under successive Conservative, trade and industry secretaries during the 1980s. Lord Sterling acted as a special adviser to five secretaries of state between 1982 and 1990.

Lord Hollick was born in Southampton in 1945, the son of a French polisher, went to the local grammar school and joined the Labour party when he was 15. He went into the City, becoming the youngest director of Hambros Bank, before being asked to rescue a failing bank which he went on to rename MAI, the company with which he made his fortune.

Whitehall sources were stressing yesterday that Lord Hollick, whose United News and Media group owns the Express titles and the Anglia and Meridian television franchises, would not be Mrs Beckett's only adviser.

Each member of the Cabinet is expected to be allowed to appoint two political advisers. One other name mentioned as a potential special adviser to Mrs Beckett is Professor Mark Taylor, who played an important role in Mrs Beckett's inner team before the election.

Gavyn Davies is top contender for new role in monetary policy

Gavyn Davies, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, has emerged as the leading contender for a newly created position of joint deputy governor of the Bank of England. The appointment would give him a leading role in setting monetary policy following yesterday's dramatic decision by Gordon Brown to hand responsibility for shifts in interest rates over to the Bank.

Such an appointment would also put Mr Davies in pole position for the governorship when Eddie George's tenure ends next May. He is one of the most respected of City economists - as well as being an independent columnist - and his wife, Sue Nye, is Gordon Brown's assistant.

The Chancellor's unexpected move, which gave effective independence to the Bank 51 years after it was nationalised, marked a dramatic shift in the new Chancellor's attitude to an independent Bank that was greeted with unconditional approval by financial markets. Bond and equity traders now expect inflation and interest rates to stay low and the pound to weaken from its recent strength.

The Chancellor's dramatic move marks the end of the 'Ken and Eddie Show' but will bring new faces into the limelight

The move, which was dubbed the most far-reaching in the Bank's 300-year history, drew the final curtain on the 'Ken and Eddie Show', as the monthly meetings between the former Chancellor Ken Clarke and the Bank's governor Eddie George were affectionately known, bringing to an end the increasingly personalised encounters that had characterised the setting of monetary policy.

The expected appointment of Gavyn Davies to the deputy governorship is part of the creation of a monetary policy committee which will comprise the governor, his two deputies and six other members. Four of the committee will be government appointments who are recognised experts in monetary policy.

Academia is well represented in the list of those being tipped for the remaining slots on the committee, with the odds shortening on David Currie, a London Business School professor and working

Labour peer, Charles Goodhart, a former Bank of England adviser who is currently a professor at the London School of Economics, Richard Portes, from the London Business School, and John Fleming, another ex-Bank man from Nuffield College, Oxford.

Runners and riders from the City include Tim Congdon, a Treasury wise person and hard-line monetarist and Paul Mortimer-Lee, chief economist at Paribas.

It is thought an industrialist is likely to feature on the committee, with Sir David Siroon of BP a possibility.

The committee will meet once a month to decide whether interest rates need to be changed, using a government-set inflation rate target (currently 2.5 per cent) as a benchmark. Any changes will be announced immediately, with the minutes of the meetings released within six weeks of the meeting.

The removal of interest rate

decisions from the Chancellor marks a dramatic shift towards a fully independent central bank.

The new regime is understood to have been modelled on New Zealand's, where the central bank is also charged with meeting a government-set inflation rate target. In Europe, the French and German central banks are given a more genuinely independent remit of achieving 'price stability', which they determine.

The proposed changes and the Chancellor's monthly meetings with the governor of the Bank, Norman Lamont established that formal ritual back in October 1992 in the wake of sterling's crash out of the ERM when a commitment arose to keep to a strict inflation target which the Bank would have a part in setting.

It was Mr Clarke's innovation in 1994, soon after his appointment, which saw minutes published six weeks after each meeting, bringing interest rate policy out into the open. The meetings were peppered with sharp disagreements between the Mr Clarke and the Governor.

Tom Stevenson

Possible shape of new monetary committee

Gavyn Davies

Hot favourite for the second deputy governorship in charge of monetary policy. Tipped to take over from Eddie George as Governor in 1998. His wife is Gordon Brown's assistant. A columnist for The Independent, he would not be tempted by a lesser position because he would have to give up a lucrative partnership at Goldman Sachs.

Howard Davies

Deputy Governor of the Bank of England since 1995, tipped to head financial stability. Made headlines as director-general of the CBI in 1992-95. Told the Bank of England while he was at the CBI that interest rates should be lower, fast-track career has included stints at the Foreign Office, consultants McKinsey and the Audit Commission.

Mervyn King

A director of the Bank of England since 1990 and chief economist since 1991. A near certainty for the new monetary committee. Won Kennedy Scholarship to Harvard before embarking on academic career. A former member of the City Council, Markets Committee and The Securities Association.

Ian Penderleith

Executive director of the Bank of England since 1994 having first joined over 30 years ago, and with Mervyn King another long-standing member of the committee. Succeeded to the role in 1994, having previously been in the Governor's Office, consultants McKinsey and the Audit Commission.

David Currie

Professor of economics at London Business School and working Labour peer (elected last year). Five years ago he became one of the first batch of Treasury 'wise men' or independent economists, experts, a post he gave up two years ago. He worked at Home Office before returning to academia in the 1970s.

Charles Goodhart

Professor of banking and finance at the London School of Economics (LSE) and a former Bank of England adviser. 1969-90. Educated at Eton, Cambridge and Harvard before doing two years National Service. Has written numerous works on monetary theory and central banking, as well as the future of the ERM.

Richard Portes

Professor of economics at London Business School (LBS) since 1995 and a director of the Centre for Economic Policy Research since 1993. Academic career taking in Yale, Oxford, Harvard and Paris. Has written books on international macroeconomic policy as well as economic transformation in Eastern Europe.

John Fleming

Has spent his life in the City, working at Paribas, Citibank and the Bank of England. A former Bank of England adviser in the Governor's Office until 1992, then chairman of the ERM 1993-95.

Tim Congdon

Economic adviser to Gerard A. National since 1989, a Treasury 'wise man' for the last four years and known throughout the City as a hard-line monetarist. He was on the staff of the Times 1973-76 and then went into the City, firstly as chief economist for L. Moseley. Has also worked for Shergon Lehman and S&W Insurance Research.

Paul Mortimer-Lee

Chief economist at Paribas, a large French investment banking house, and a former senior economist adviser at the Bank of England. While at the Bank of England he worked for the 'current' chief economist, Mervyn King.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD (%)
FTSE 100	4519.30	+83.70	+1.4	4519.30	4055.80	3.60	4519.30	4055.80	3.60
FTSE 250	4520.20	+22.10	+0.5	4729.40	4469.40	3.58	4729.40	4469.40	3.58
FTSE 350	2303.30	+27.00	+0.2	2203.30	2017.90	3.60	2203.30	2017.90	3.60
FT All Share	2167.26	+25.01	+0.2	2374.20	2173.29	3.04	2374.20	2173.29	3.04
New York	2167.26	+25.01	+0.2	2167.26	1989.78	3.56	2167.26	1989.78	3.56
Tokyo	20180.92	+666.17	+3.4	2241.78	5032.94	1.73	2241.78	5032.94	1.73
Hong Kong	12579.34	+180.00	+1.3	13088.24	12055.17	3.161	13088.24	12055.17	3.161
Frankfurt	3568.28	+39.50	+1.1	3568.28	2048.77	1.537	3568.28	2048.77	1.537

INTEREST RATES									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	15 Year
UK	6.97	6.97	7.09	8.23	7.16	8.34	8.34	8.34	8.34
US	5.82	6.12	6.67	6.83	6.89	7.05	7.05	7.05	7.05
Japan	0.47	0.81	2.42	2.42	2.42	2.42	2.42	2.42	2.42
Germany	3.06	3.31	5.72	6.57	6.57	6.57	6.57	6.57	6.57

CURRENCIES									
£/\$ 				£/DM 				£/¥ 	
<small>Only first exchange rates and US Dollar Day of 1987 hours</small>									
Pound				Dollar					
Yesterday Change Year Ago				Yesterday Change Year Ago					
\$ (London) 1.6398 +1.56c 1.6025 \$ (NY) 1.6375 +1.35c 1.5080 DM (London) 2.0100 +1.24c 2.0045 ¥ (London) 155.245 -0.2212157 154.91 £ Index 103.6 -0.8 83.7				£ (London) 0.6110 -0.70 0.6656 £ (NY) 0.6107 -0.51 0.6631 DM (London) 1.2281 -0.69p 1.5273 ¥ (London) 128.410 -1.34c 128.410 \$ Index 105.4 -0.6 96.3					
OTHER INDICATORS									
Yesterday Day's chg Year Ago				Index Latest Tr Ago Next Figs					
Oil Brent \$ 17.99 +0.18 18.71 Gold \$ 342.75 +2.85 389.20				RPI 155.4 +2.60c 150.9 18 May GDP 109.7 +2.60c 107.0 25 May					

<p>nomics at London Business School (LBS) since 1995 and a director of the Centre for Economic Policy Research since 1989. His career taking in Yale, Oxford, Harvard and Paris. Has written books on international macroeconomic policy as well as economic transformation in Eastern Europe.</p>		<p>Tim Congdon Economic adviser to Gerard J. National since 1989, a Treasury 'wise person' for the last four years and known throughout the City as a hard-line monetarist. He was on the staff of the Times 1973-76 and then went into the City, firstly as chief economist for J. Messert. Has also worked for Shearson Lehman and SRN. Now writes</p>	<p>life during on at Oxford. He was on the staff of the Bank of England and the Treasury and was an adviser to the Governor 1984-88 and the Prime Minister 1987-91. Until 1992 he was economist at the EBRD 1991-93.</p>		<p>Paul Mortimore Lee Chief economist at Paribas, a large French investment banking house, and a former senior economic adviser at the Bank of England. While at the Bank of England he worked for the current chief economist, Mervyn King.</p>
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سكدا من الاميل



COMMENT

Yesterday's announcement was enough to take a full half-a-percentage point off long-term interest rates. If that's what surrendering half your job does for the economy, we'll have more of that please.

The right move, without a shadow of a doubt

Gordon Brown's conversion to the cause of an independently determined monetary policy has been such a swift one that the rather eccentric approach he eventually adopts should come as no surprise. It wasn't so many years ago that the new Chancellor was against it altogether, though to be fair he has accepted for some little while now that Bank of England independence is "a good thing" in principle – an acceptance that found its expression in the curious hotch-pot of half-way house proposals he announced a couple of months back.

The speed of Mr Brown's passage from that unsatisfactory compromise position to the present full embrace has surprised everyone, not least because up until yesterday Mr Brown always insisted that the Bank would need to earn its independence. Is this, then, policy on the hoof, policy made in haste for the purpose of grabbing the headlines and establishing Mr Brown's credentials as a great reforming chancellor? Such a momentous change, once the principle of independence is accepted, surely demands a period of public consultation and consideration before deciding on the structure to carry it out?

It is not hard to pick holes in the detail of Mr Brown's plans. What is proposed is a peculiarly British approach to the problem. The Chancellor is like Tony Benn deciding on the future of nuclear power. He's gone for the made in Britain, advanced gas cooled reactor option, and the design faults are already obvious. Certainly what is proposed is substantially different to the existing great independent central banks of the world, the Federal Reserve Bank in the US and the Bundesbank in Germany. The most marked similarity is with the approach adopted in New Zealand, but should we really be looking to a country of only 3 million people to set our economic agenda?

The Government will continue to set the main parameters of policy – namely the inflation target and perhaps also a semi-official exchange rate target too. That is not the case in Germany and the US. Moreover, the Chancellor's approach is also distinguished by the mechanisms he has chosen for making monetary policy more accountable both to the Government and the country than it often is in other parts of the world.

The monetary committee that will decide on interest-rate policy will in practice be appointed entirely by the Chancellor. Four members are automatically appointed by him, the Governor and two deputy governors will eventually be appointed by him, and the two Bank of England career men will have to be approved by him. It can readily be seen that the scope for "cronyism" is quite marked. The same is true of the Court of the Bank of England where the Chancellor will be making four of his own people directors as soon as possible. The Court will then progressively be made to reflect the country's various regions and interest groups. Quite how "independent" the Bank will be by the end of this process is anyone's guess.

However, all these criticisms are nipping when set against the magnitude of the decision, which without a shadow of a doubt is the right one for any government, more so for an unproven Labour administration always likely to face an uphill struggle in establishing credibility with the markets. By tying his hands to an independent monetary policy, Mr Brown should be able to avoid those perennial financial crises that have bedevilled previous Labour governments, sapping them of their vitality and derailing their policies.

For John Redwood and Kenneth Clarke to say, as they did yesterday, that the new Chancellor is giving away most of his job is poppycock. Yesterday's announcement was enough of itself to take a full half-a-percentage-point off long-term interest rates, with the yield premium on British long bonds falling to within one-and-a-half points of their German equivalent for the first time in recent memory. If that's what surrendering half your job does for the economy, we'll have more of that please.

But let's not get too carried away in the euphoria of revolution. There is one obvious difficulty with the new arrangements, one quite clear area with potential for conflict – the strength of the pound. The more hawkish monetary policy likely to be advanced by an independent Bank only reinforces that strength, fighting against the economy's need and the Government's desire for a more acceptable exchange rate.

As things stand we risk returning to the dog days of the ERM, when a combination of high exchange rate and short-term interest rates perpetuated deep recession. Here the solution is in the Chancellor's hands, however. If he cools the economy with a rather tighter fiscal policy, then the Bank will be able to ease off on short-term interest rates and the pound will begin to fall back once more. The Chancellor has shown himself capable of bold and decisive action; let's hope he can follow it through in the rest of economic policy.

Capital is music to Branson's ears

Richard Branson's foray into railways proves anywhere near as lucrative as his stab at running a radio station, then the Virgin boss, or to be more precise the bewildering web of trusts that hold his assets, can look forward to becoming richer still.

The £87m that Capital Radio is coughing up for Virgin Radio must be music to Mr Branson's ears. The station was launched a mere four years ago with comparatively modest investment, and although it broke into profit last year and has done better this year, the latest figures show it losing market share in the all-important and overcrowded London radio market.

But this, above all else, is a marriage of convenience. Mr Branson's original plan was to float Virgin Radio even though history

shows us that he and stock market investors do not make happy bedfellows. By selling out in exchange for a 14 per cent stake in Capital Radio he has done the next best thing, gaining access to a quoted stock without the hassle of a listing.

For Capital, the deal provides access to the new digital radio age through the nationwide AM frequency on which Virgin broadcasts. If this is the future of radio, then Capital has bought itself a seat at the table at a reasonable price that brings the wherewithal and critical mass to make a go of it.

So far, so Smashy and Nicey. Where is the downside? First, Virgin has built its appeal and its advertising revenues playing contemporary rock. In order to satisfy the Radio Authority's requirement to protect both diversity and plurality, Capital intends to devote Virgin's FM licence in London to a much more specialised and narrower audience of male, hard rock fans.

Second, this is not a done deal. Although the merger will keep Capital safely beneath all the regulatory thresholds on market share, there is still a public interest test to pass and the authorities may conclude that Capital is just too big for its boots. The last time Capital applied for a new London FM licence, it was turned down. Third, Capital finds itself with a large minority shareholder on the books. Mr Branson is free to exit after two years. If by then digital radio is failing to live up to its billing, then both he and Capital could be the poorer.

IN BRIEF

Investors seek Bre-X damages

A New York law firm has filed a law suit against Bre-X Minerals, the Canadian gold mining firm whose claims to have discovered the world's largest gold deposit have been exposed as a hoax. Wechsler Harwood Halehian & Feller is seeking class action status to recover damages for shareholders hurt by the scandal. Bre-X shares plunged on resumption of trading in Canada yesterday, falling C\$3.16 to C\$0.07. Almost 40 million shares changed hands, forcing the exchange to suspend dealings for an hour to enable trading systems to cope with the volumes. Bre-X shares hit a high of C\$280 last autumn.

German unemployment up

Unemployment in Germany rose in April, casting further doubt on its ability to meet economic convergence criteria for the single European currency in 1999. Figures from the Federal Labour Office showed that unemployment rose by 8,000 to a seasonally adjusted 4,299,000. While politically sensitive unadjusted unemployment fell from 4,477,000 in March to 4,347,000 in April, giving a jobless rate of 11.5 per cent, economists called the figures disappointing. Hans Guenter Redeker at Chase Investments said: "The figures will put more pressure on the government, throwing their forecast for a 2.9 per cent [ratio of 1997 budget deficit to gross domestic product] yet further into question." Industry orders for March showed a greater-than-expected rise of 1.1 per cent compared with February. Domestic orders rose 0.7 per cent in March from February but were down 4.2 per cent from a year earlier.

BP warns Brown on taxes

British Petroleum warned the Government not make big changes to the business tax system. John Browne, chief executive, also made clear the group's opposition to any moves by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, to raise oil taxes in his July Budget. Mr Browne said: "We would not like the corporation tax system altered or rates to be adjusted. This would be bad in general and bad for us because this is our home country."

The comments came as BP announced record profits before tax and exceptional items of £755m for the first three months of the year, an increase of 19 per cent. Earnings from exploration and production surged by 24 per cent to £913m, while BP said there were signs that profit margins from refining and retailing were improving after last year's slump. The company also warned that it would need to spend at least \$100m (£62m) solving the millennium computer problem. Investment column, page 22.

Unilever to meet pensioners

Unilever, the Anglo Dutch consumer goods giant, attempted to diffuse a rebellion from some of its 44,000 pensioners over use of an £800m pension fund surplus. Niall Fitzgerald, chairman, told shareholders at the group's annual general meeting in London yesterday that he would meet pensioner representatives for talks on 19 May to try to sort out the grievances. They are unhappy that the company has used £260m of the surplus to declare a pensions holiday and cover future liabilities for fund members who took early retirement from the company.

Wace warns again on profits

Shares in Wace more than halved at one point yesterday after the printing services group shattered market expectations with its third profits warning in 12 months. The shares plunged 40p, before recovering to end 33.5p lower at 41p, on the announcement that the group would report operating losses both at the half-year and full-year stages in 1997.

The group said the improvement in its US businesses had not come through as expected, while a range of problems had hit European operations. The terms of a supply agreement with Hallmark, continued losses at an Irish plant, a reduction in demand for spirits labels and competition in the printing market were among the reasons cited for the difficulties. In March Wace revealed losses of £2.04m had replaced profits of £20.5m in 1996, but said it expected a recovery in the second half of 1997, which it now says will not be achieved.

Intel launches improved Pentium

Businesses were promised enhanced performance and speed as the world's leading personal computer makers helped Intel launch its latest chip, the Pentium II processor. The California-based company, which is said to have more than 80 per cent of the market for the components that power PCs, claims the product keeps it at the leading edge by combining innovative and proven technologies.

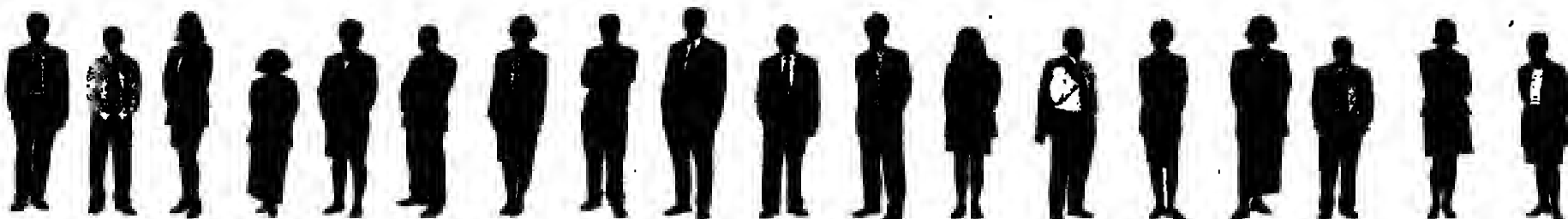
In particular, by incorporating the MMX multimedia technology it launched earlier this year it offers corporate customers the capability to use "visual computing" to convert raw data into rich 3D models in seconds. Computer makers, such as Hewlett-Packard, Dell, Compaq and Gateway 2000, will start shipping models equipped with the new technology this week, and it is anticipated that private consumers will be able to buy them by the end of the year.

T&N sale will help asbestos fund

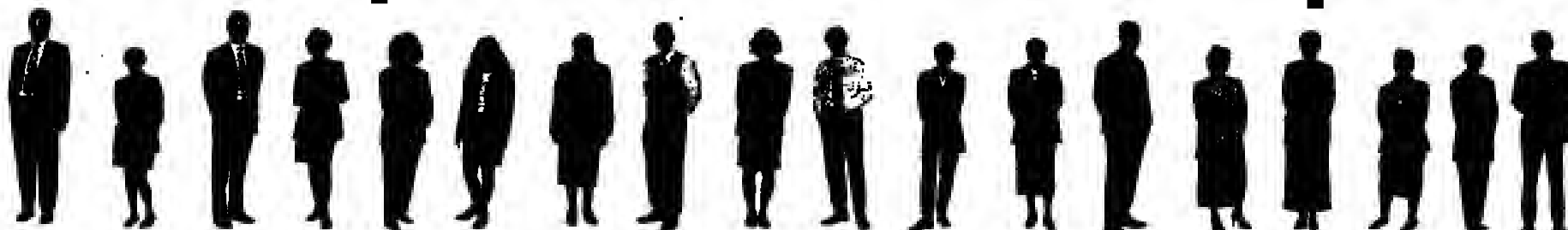
T&N, the automotive components and engineering group, said it has sold the Ferodo Caernarfon clutch facing and industrial friction products business to American investors for £5m cash, which would be put into the fund which has been established in respect of future asbestos-related disease claims. In 1996, Ferodo Caernarfon recorded a pre-tax loss of £200,000 on sales of £9.6m.

Birmingham City warns on transfers

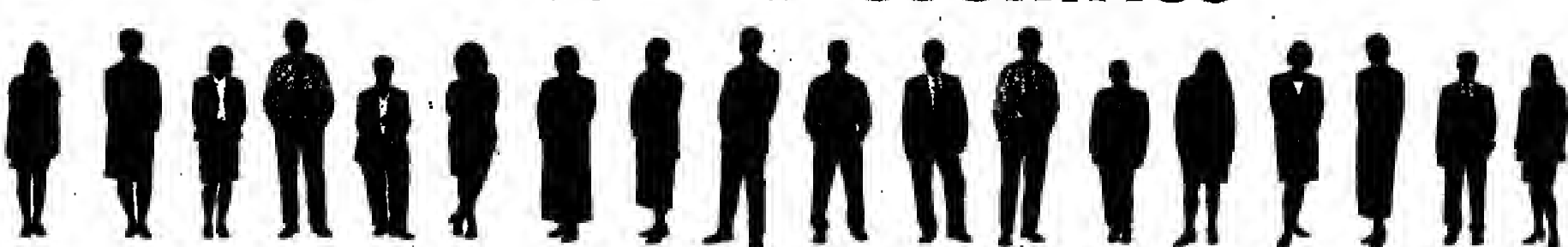
Birmingham City warned investors that it will make a loss in the full year if the club makes large player purchases, as it writes off transfer fees to profit and loss as incurred. The statement came after the AIM-listed club posted pre-tax profits of £2.7m for the six months to 28 February. The figure included a net profit of £1.4m on player transfers, principally the sale of Gary Breen to Coventry City. Birmingham said proceeds from the sale will be reinvested in new signings.



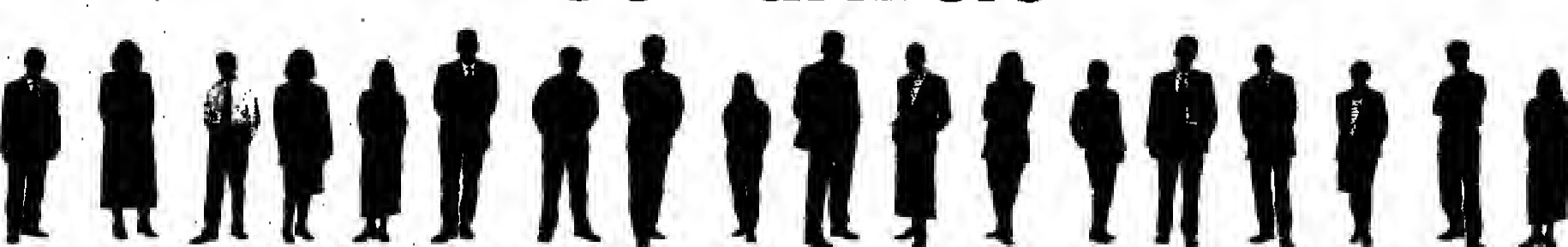
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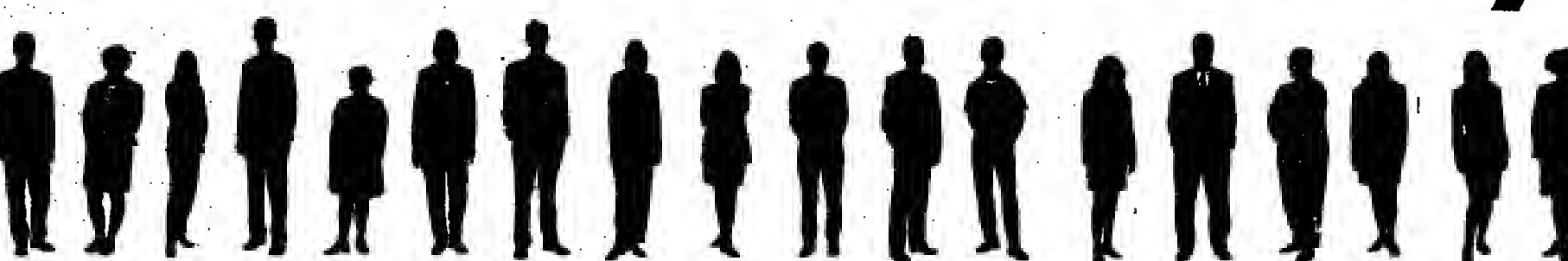
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Not bad for a first day



business

Capital acquires Virgin Radio

Cathy Newman

Capital Radio yesterday moved to position itself for the pending digital radio battle with the BBC by acquiring Virgin Radio, which was founded only four years ago by Richard Branson.

Some City analysts, however, believed that Capital had paid a high price for Virgin's two commercial stations, Virgin AM, which broadcasts nationally, and the London rock station, Virgin FM. Assuming debt of £22m, Capital's investment amounts to almost £90m and equates to almost five-and-a-half times revenue.

One analyst said: "Capital does have a phenomenal track record in radio. If anyone could do this deal and get away with it, Capital could."

However, other analysts were relieved that Capital had decided to consolidate its hold on the radio market. The

company's diversification into restaurants with the purchase of the My Kinda Town chain last year had caused concern.

Lorna Tibbani, media analyst at Pannure Gordon, said Capital had paid a "very full" price, but she added: "Strategically, Virgin fits in well. It's in Capital's heartland."

Capital is funding the deal entirely in shares. Virgin will be issued with 11.87 million Capital shares, giving it a 14 per cent stake in the enlarged group. Mr Branson will join Capital's board as a non-executive director.

Richard Eyre, managing director of Capital, claimed that the deal was "good news for listeners, regulators and advertisers". Mr Branson said the merger allowed both companies to challenge the BBC's "dominance" of digital audio broadcasting.

Virgin AM, in common with the other two national commercial stations, is guaranteed



On the air: Richard Branson with presenter Russ Williams at Virgin Radio's opening. The station's emphasis will now change

a digital licence next year. Some observers, though, have been underwhelmed by the prospect of digital radio, which, although providing CD-quality reception, does not allow for an increase in the number of stations.

Capital will also seek "further co-operation" with Mr Branson's other business interests, including his overseas radio operations which could even-

tually be absorbed into Capital. Cost savings from yesterday's deal will be made by moving Virgin from its location in Golden Square in London's West End to Capital's offices in Leicester Square.

David Campbell, chief executive of Virgin Radio, and Andrew Mollett, the financial director, will leave but will remain with Mr Branson's Virgin

Media Group - the newly formed umbrella company which controls Virgin Net, Virgin Radio International, and Virgin Television. Mr Campbell is to work on a digital television project which will launch at the end of the year.

Capital is to change the emphasis of the Virgin stations to attract less mainstream and more male listeners. It will also

create a distinct London rock station on the FM service.

Capital will sell airtime for its own and Virgin's stations. As a result, it will withdraw from Media Sales & Marketing, the radio sales house it acquired in 1989. Stations owned by Emap and GWR and currently sold by MS&M will as a result have to seek alternative representation. Comment, page 21

Setback for Eurotunnel's £1bn claim

Michael Harrison

Eurotunnel suffered a fresh setback yesterday after an independent panel of experts threw out the vast bulk of its £1bn claim against the consortium that built the Channel Tunnel, Transmanche Link.

The five-man Anglo-French panel ruled that a large number of Eurotunnel's compensation claims relating to the passenger and freight shuttle trains supplied by TML were inadmissible.

The ruling is a blow to Eurotunnel, coming as it does a matter of weeks before it seeks approval from shareholders and banks for the refinancing of its £8.7bn debt mountain.

A favourable ruling from the panel would have helped sentiment as it attempts to persuade shareholders to back a deal which could see Eurotunnel's bankers emerge with a stake in the tunnel of more than 60 per cent.

Eurotunnel sought to put a brave face on the defeat, saying that it may still take its claims to arbitration before the International Chamber of Commerce.

However, TML was cock-a-bop with the verdict, saying it vindicated the position it had taken all along in its dispute. A spokesman for the five British and five French construction firms that make up TML said that the panel's ruling "nullified" Eurotunnel's £1bn claim.

The panel said Eurotunnel

was entitled to damages for faults in some of the rolling stock but could not seek compensation for loss of revenues owing to late arrival of the shuttle trains. It suggested that the two sides negotiate appropriate compensation between themselves.

According to TML, the claims upheld by the panel relate to less than 5 per cent of the £1bn claimed and concern only defects on the HGV shuttles.

Eurotunnel disputed this, suggesting that while many of the claims had been rejected, it was still entitled to substantial compensation.

It said its board would decide whether to submit the claim to arbitration. Eurotunnel has 90 days to make a decision.

The panel, chaired by a French lawyer, Philippe Malinvaud, also ruled that a £40m counter-claim filed by TML was inadmissible.

However, TML indicated that the claim, for extra work done on the tunnel and the costs of defending Eurotunnel's action, was likely to be pursued since it was not rejected on substantive grounds.

The fleet of nine tourist shuttles and eight HGV shuttles cost £705m to build, compared with an original estimate of £252m.

The HGV shuttles arrived six months late and the tourist shuttles a year late, forcing Eurotunnel to delay the launch of the respective services until May and December 1994.

Whisky producers may link up

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

William Grant & Sons, one of Scotland's best known whisky distillers and the producer of the Glenfiddich single malt, could be close to a link-up with one of its struggling rivals.

The Scotch whisky industry is rife with speculation that William Grant is in talks with Burn Stewart Distillers, the publicly quoted whisky group which has seen its shares slump following a dispute with its auditors.

Through the deal is expected to stop short of a full-scale takeover or merger, it is thought

that William Grant may take a stake of up to 49 per cent in Burn Stewart. It would involve Stewart issuing new shares while the two groups would pool their own-label operations which produce Scotch for supermarkets.

The details are included in the May issue of *Scottish Business Insider*, which was published yesterday. It says the two sides have been in talks for some time and that Grant was initially seeking as much as 50 per cent of Stewart.

Neither company was available for comment yesterday. However, Alan Gray, the whisky expert at Sutherlands, the Ed-

inburgh broker, said: "I can't say whether there is any truth in it, but it is certainly plausible."

One London analyst commented: "It wouldn't surprise me for one minute. Both groups have own-label operations and they have been under-cutting each other for some time. Putting the two divisions together would ease competition and improve margins."

The deal would help Burn Stewart as it has high gearing and has been under pressure since an accounting dispute forced it to defer £2.3m of profits until the second half of the current year.

For William Grant, the pooling of resources in the own-label market would be one benefit. The deal could also involve a clause under which Burn Stewart would buy its grain whisky from Grant.

William Grant & Sons is privately owned and run by the Grant Gordon family. It made profits of £26.9m on sales of £254m last year. Burn Stewart's profits slumped from £4m to £1m last year due to the deferred profit on whisky stocks.

Burn Stewart shares remained unchanged at 60p yesterday. They were floated at 140p in 1991.

Norwich members in line for £800 on float

Nic Cicutti
Personal Finance Editor

Norwich Union, one of the UK's biggest mutual insurers, yesterday unveiled plans to give its 2.9 million qualifying members free shares worth about £800 each when it floats on the stock market next month.

Norwich Union expects to hand out 1.3 billion free shares. Qualifying with-profits policy members will be entitled to a minimum of 300 shares each, with more handed out on the basis of how much has been invested. Qualifying non-profit policy

members will each receive a fixed allocation of 150 shares. The company said it would also offer members a significant discount on £1.75bn of shares it is planning to sell in an additional capital-raising exercise.

Of this money, £1.5bn will be paid into Norwich Union's with-profit fund, to replace the value of the company's general insurance arm previously held in it.

Details of the discount will be sent to members after 21 May, with dealing set to start on 10 June. The minimum application for shares will be £400. Closing date for applications is 10 June.

Company Results

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Stratford City (1)	4.39m (-)	2.80m (-)	-	-
British Petroleum (1)	-	752m (625m)	10.5p (12.9p)	5.25p (4.25p)
British Telecommunications (1)	5.33m (0.02m)	3.38m (-1.81m)	21p (17p)	-
Capital Radio (1)	53.9m (36.1m)	17m (15.8m)	15.1p (14.1p)	4.3p (4p)
Chesford Properties (1)	37.9m (37.2m)	1.8m (7.87m)	-11.25p (20.3p)	13.4p (-)
Citigroup (1)	15.0m (4.89m)	-2.67m (-6.56m)	-0.04p (-0.09p)	-
Comet (1)	33.0m (8.26m)	1.6m (-1.3m)	10.3p (7.6p)	1.5p (-)
London & Lancashire (1)	170m (175m)	10.9m (9.77m)	39.5p (37.1p)	20p (18.75p)
Network Television (1)	8.52m (6.77m)	1.51m (1.4m)	4.04p (3.13p)	0.5p (-)
Shire (1)	83.2m (141m)	17.4m (-4.01m)	21.8p (5.4p)	1p (1p)
Shire Pharmaceuticals (1)	3.56m (2.81m)	1.25m (0.74m)	8.4p (5.3p)	-

(1) - First (1) - Interim (1) - First quarter * - Figures show replacement cost profit after exceptional items
† - Figures show historic cost profit after exceptional items

Pressure mounts for BP buy-back

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

The management at British Petroleum could well have been singing Labour's campaign anthem, "Things can only get better", as they unveiled yet another set of record profits for the first quarter yesterday. Whether or not the chairman, Sir David Simon, decides to join Tony Blair's merry band, the stock market was cheering. The share price ended 29p higher at 732.5p as analysts asked the big question: whether BP will be tempted into a more ambitious exercise to return value to investors. BP's chief executive John Browne cautiously insisted share buy-backs or special dividends were not on the immediate agenda yesterday, but with numbers like these the markets are salivating.

Progress in all directions was better than expected. Replacement cost profits before taxes and exceptional items, the best underlying measure of performance, surged by 19 per cent in sterling terms to £755m, while the result in dollars was up 27 per cent, the difference reflecting the surge in sterling over the past year. The return on capital climbed to 19 per cent, the kind of figure Shell's top team would die for.

Better still, BP appears to have overcome wobbles this year about falling oil prices after the excesses of 1996, when a barrel of crude was selling for as much as \$25. So far in 1997 prices have dipped to \$18, which BP insisted was in line with a long-term trading range of between \$16 and \$19. This compares with the company's internal benchmark for investment projects of an ultra-cautious \$14.

Against falling prices, BP has seen even faster benefits from its self-help programme, channelled like a corporate mantra from office to office in the hunt for extra profit. To recap, the target set in 1995 was to save \$1.5bn over five years from cost cutting and higher productivity, yet last year alone BP saved \$600m and promptly brought forward its timetable by 12 months.

In this quarter it has saved another \$120m and is hoping for even more towards the end of the year, so the internal target for 1997 of \$300m looks increasingly conservative. Part of the drive behind these improvements comes from naked self-interest, as BP executives get their full personal bonuses as if savings reach twice the target level.

After a dividend hike in the last quarter it was too much to hope for another one this time, though further increases in the second half are now certain. There is no constraint from borrowings, which at \$6bn compare with long-term aspirations of \$7bn to \$8bn, but the reason Mr Browne remains cagey about raising the payout is, of course, political. Dishing out cash in special dividends or buy-backs would be a red rag to Labour as the other Mr Brown (Gordon that is) contemplates raising North Sea oil tax. Yet the pressure from the market for BP to do something by the

Shire's portfolio is blossoming

Shire Pharmaceuticals is putting in a strong bid to be taken seriously as more than just a biotechnology hopeful. Following on from February's chunky £105m acquisition of Pharmacia, a US drugs delivery group, yesterday the group was demonstrating the breadth of its drugs pipeline in a research and development update.

Galantamine, the compound originally derived from daffodils which represents Shire's lead product, is indicated for use against Alzheimer's disease, the group is now ready to test its use against chronic fatigue syndrome, also known as ME or "yuppie flu". A

300-patient trial into both efficacy and tolerability will start later this month, with another involving 60 people in Iceland due to start in September. If it ever reaches doctors' surgeries, perhaps in 2005, it could be attacking a \$2.5bn market for which there is no current treatment, the company believes. But there is more, for early observations using galantamine against Alzheimer's appear to show it is effective against both rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, two other big markets.

Meanwhile, analysts are excited by the prospects for Lambda, a treatment for reducing phosphate levels in the blood of people with kidney disease. Untreated, a build up of phosphate can lead to bone disease. Shire is already the market leader in the UK in this area with its calcium carbonate product, but Lambda is said to offer substantial improvements. The potential market is 1.6 million patients world-wide and this could be the first drug to be marketed outside the UK directly by Shire.

Finally, Shire reckons Nidipine SR, a cardiovascular which could be launched before 2000, might sell into a US market worth \$1.1bn. That will depend, however, on whether it can

overcome expected legal action from Pfizer, the current market leader.

The wide portfolio at Shire is matched by the depth of its management. Much still depends on the outcome of the phase III tests for the Alzheimer's drug, due in September, but Lehman Brothers estimate the shares' net present value at 274p, rising to 364p next year. That is below the current market price of 219p, up 2p, and makes them a reasonable punt.

Sidlaw repackages its strategy

Sidlaw has been through the wars since its disastrous 1993 decision to step up the scale of its flexible packaging operations. That led to losses over the past two years and a plunging share price, but John Dunston, who took over as chief executive in the autumn, is starting to use his experience in the industry to good effect.

Last year's move to dump the oil services business took the decision to concentrate on packaging to its logical conclusion. But Mr Dunston has also put a lot of effort into improving customer service and efficiency, two areas which appeared neglected under the dash for volume policy which led Sidlaw astray before. The fruits of these labours are reflected in the group's half-year results to March, although the figures are distorted by the £17.3m profit on the sale of oil services and a £1.7m charge for rationalisation.

Stripping that lot out, the underlying pre-tax total rose from a loss of £1.41m to a profit of £1.75m.

The proceeds of the disposal of oil services cut the interest charge from £2.09m to £1.62m and left net cash of £3.3m in March. The group reckons it has firepower for £25m of acquisitions, but nothing is imminent. In the meantime, it will be pushed into borrowings again by a £12m capital expenditure programme this year.

Part of the spending will help service a £6m-a-year contract to supply Cadbury with wrappers and should also improve efficiency. Sidlaw also claims to have won back most of the customers lost during its difficult patch.

The problem remains, however, that the group is still highly dependent on mature or declining markets like biscuits and confectionery, which remain at the mercy of the supermarket price wars. Even with innovative products like its R-Plus "breathable" fresh-produce wrapper, it still has to prove it is not just running to stand still.

Profits of £3.5m in the full year would put the shares, down 3p at 103.5p, on a forward p/e of 23. The shadow of previous rights issues at 275p and 180p hangs over the shares, but they are probably still worth holding.

Nursing an ambition to succeed on the buses

Ann Gloag may now preside over the £1.4bn Stagecoach transport empire which she co-founded with her brother Brian Souler, but she spent most of her earlier life as a nurse. So it is entirely appropriate that she should donate £180,000 to the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, to found a new academic chair in nursing.

Mrs Gloag says: "I remember my 20 years in nursing, years I greatly enjoyed. It was always my intention to succeed in business and when I did to do something positive to help young people who have chosen a career in nursing."

The Ann Gloag Chair of Nursing (Development) will reside in the University's associate faculty of nursing, midwifery and community studies. Mrs Gloag's donation will fund the chair for three years.

While most of us may be expecting a reasonably healthy UK economy for another two years or so, the insolvency profession is already gearing up for the next crash. This month's issue of *Legal Business* magazine carries the following blood-curdling full-page job ad: "Liquidation. Receivership. Bankruptcy. (A few cheering words for insolvency lawyers.) What goes around comes around. When the next recession arrives our client, one of London's most profitable and progressive law firms, will be more than prepared to take advantage of it."

Jonathan Brenner, whose recruitment consultancy, Zarak Maerse Brenner, placed the ad, says the law firm involved is "banking on a dip in the economy in about 18 months' time". You heard it here first. And the lucky lawyer to get the job will be paid up to £300,000. It's an ill wind, and all that.

My heartiest congratulations go to Mark Herbert, an old pal of mine who has just been appointed director of communications at T1 Group, the international engineering business.

Mr Herbert, 38, has already racked up considerable experience in corporate spin-doctoring. He managed corporate communications for Lucas Industries, and had stints at two consultancies, Shandwick and Lowe Bell Financial.

But those of us who attended Birmingham University with Mark 17 years ago think of him in quite different terms: primarily as a songwriter for a rock group called the Struggling Artists, a beat combo of note in the early 1980s - well, in the Selly Oak area, anyway. Mark penned the lyrics for "You want to know" and other campus classics.

"It was all a long time ago," Mark murmurs, modestly. Well a pedigree like that is nothing to be embarrassed about. Tony Blair, after all, is famous for having played in a rock group called Ugly Rumours while at university, and it didn't do him any harm.

The London Investment Banking Association (LIBA) has just published its annual report, and interesting reading it makes. Under the heading "Regulatory Developments," LIBA mentions the collapse of Barings, the mis-selling of pensions and the Maxwell affair.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Ann Gloag: Once a nurse, now presiding over the £1.4bn Stagecoach business

It observes: "It must, nevertheless, be questioned how far any of these failures was the result of the structure of the regulatory regime, and whether a shuffling of that structure is the best way to give assurance that the next decade will be freer of such episodes."

I see that LIBA does not mention certain other recent episodes, such as the aborted bid for the Co-op by Andrew Regan, which drew down such furious criticism upon the head of Sir Chips Keswick, chairman of Hambros. As it happens, Sir Chips is also a member of LIBA's chairman's committee, and himself chairs LIBA's banking committee. Alas, LIBA may see some "shuffling" of regulatory structures yet.

Lord Alexander is nearly ready to unveil the newly refurbished NatWest Tower in the heart of the City, four years after the Bishopsgate bombing. NatWest's chairman has decided that the tower's floors are too small for the demands of modern banking, which requires large dealing floors.

He is therefore offering to rent the landmark office building out as a "sophisticated multi-tenanted office complex" where NatWest will supply all sorts of state-of-the-art services and amenities. Makes a change from traded options, I suppose.

John Willcock

150 من الجاهل

Tigers bank
on style
of Stransky

If you would like to know more about Philips range of lighting products, call 0181 686 1966 (Fantasy Football questions cannot be answered on this line)

Panama's mission to conquer Italy

RICHARD EDMONDSON
reports from Chester

Shergar, Henbit and Quest For Fame all emerged from the Chester Vase to win the Derby and there was another Classic tremor yesterday when Panama City was successful as the Roadie. They are shaking in their boots at the Capannelle, where Peter Chapple-Hyam's colt is likely to appear next in the Italian Blue Riband.

If this victory was vindication for the decision to supplement the colt for Epsom it was also one that tested the heart chambers of his connections. Panama City was last turning into the straight and had to strain every sinew to force his head past State Fair. Peter Chapple-Hyam, his trainer, conceded that Rome rather than Epsom should be his next destination. Connoisseurs of the arts would probably agree with him.

"We weren't planning to ride him like that because we wanted to go from a long way out, but John (Reid, the jockey) said he couldn't get out and had to sit and suffer," Chapple-Hyam said. "He had to use speed, which isn't his forte as he's more of a stayer."

Chapple-Hyam added that Revequie, his 2,000 Guineas runner-up, had worked pleasingly (for him) in a morning gallop at Manton and would

probably take in the Irish 2,000 Guineas before being committed to the Derby. The colt's owner, Robert Sangster, has seen this way before, with The Minstrel, and certainly sees no reason to be perturbed by Entrepreneur, even if the Guinness winner is odds-on for Epsom.

There was another entry for the chunky family scrapbook belonging to Entrepreneur's sire, Sadler's Wells, yesterday when two more of his sons fought out the previous race, Canon Falls.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Perfect Paradigm (Chester, 2.10)
NB: Canon Can (Chester, 3.10)

Pisudski's half-brother, hanging on from Solo Mio. The winner's rider, Frankie Dettori, also sees Entrepreneur as an incredible force, if not an irresistible one. "I was very impressed by Entrepreneur and I'm just hoping one comes out of the pack, and my pack in particular, to challenge him," the Italian said. "He still has to stay the extra half mile, but as far as I could see from the race and the replays he looked so laid back and he has such a fluid action there is no problem."

"The next 10 days is vital as York in particular is always a very good Derby trial. But my dad (Gianfranco) rode Wollow,

who was 10-11, in the Derby and he finished sixth, and Tenby was 4-5 when he lost so there is still a chance for anybody."

The opening contest, the Joseph Heller Fly Agnes Stakes, was more a match. No 2, Ithao Catch 22 as Daunting Lady was purposed to the front from the rail draw by Pat Eddery before leading all the way. Richard Hannan, the trainer, often wins this contest and also the Queen Mary Stakes at Royal Ascot (Fly Baby, Lyric Fantasy and Risky have done it before) and now Daunting Lady will attempt to improve his record.

Eddery's likely Epsom ride is John Dunlop's Silver Patriarch, who was third in Sandown's Classic Trial and owes goes for Lingfield's Derby audition on Saturday. He, too, gave a morsel of hope for those who have not got fancy numbers of an ante-post voucher about Entrepreneur. "He's definitely a top-class horse," he said. "I followed him all the way in the Guinness and he travelled so easily he could have won over five [furlongs]."

"His mother was a six furlong plus animal and he's by Sadler's Wells, who was a mile and a quarter horse (Eddery rode him) so he's not a certainty to get a mile and a half. But if he does we're all in trouble."

As Pat Eddery knows, the only certainty in racing is that people use clichés all the time.



John Reid (centre) produces Panama City late to win at Chester. Photograph: Allsport

Phantom's live chance

When Top Cees was led in the winner's enclosure after the Chester Cup two years ago, the only sound was the gentle clip-clop of his hooves, as convinced were the spectators that on his previous outing at Newmarket his true merit had been carefully concealed. We may discover this afternoon whether Lynda Ramsden, his trainer, has now been forgiven, since Top Cees will set off as one of the market leaders for the 1997 renewal, but it could be that while the form from 1995 will assist in finding the winner, it will be a different horse in the frame when they pass the winning post for the

third time after an 18-furlong gallop around Chester.

Consider this. When Top Cees won the Cup two years ago, he raced off a handicap mark of 72. Back in third place, racing off 90, was the Flying Phantom. Today, the respective marks are 87 and 78, an overall swing of eleven proportions, and yet while Top Cees is an 11-2 chance with the Tote this morning, The Flying Phantom, who is 27lb better off with Mrs Ramsden's horse for a five-and-a-half furlong beating, is available at 12-1.

It is true that The Flying Phantom has not raced on the Flat for almost two years, but three runs over hurdles this winter, the most recent just 42 days ago, should ensure that he is fit and ready for today's assignment.

"The owners were keen to have another crack at Chester so this has been the plan for some time," Phil Green, assistant to Mark Tompkins, the gelding's trainer, said yesterday.

"He was aimed pretty high earlier in his career, he's run in the Derby and the Ascot Gold Cup and taken on all sorts of good horses, and if you go through his form you can find some really good ones, most notably in the Chester Cup. He's a tough customer, we know he'll handle the track and we're hoping he'll go very well."

The best-backed runner in today's field are Bowcliffe Court, already a winner this season after a winter move from Barry Hills to Reg Akehurst, and Henry Cecil's Canon Can, but neither appears particularly well-handicapped, and THE FLYING PHANTOM (nap 3.45) is an excellent each-way bet at the early odds.

The main event on the undercard is the Cheshire Oaks, four of the five runners in which are still engaged in the original Oaks, but such is this colt's record as a Classic trial in recent years that it seems likely that Kyle Rhea (3.45), the only one without an Apsom entry, will come home in front. Perfect Paradigm (next best 2.10) is still in the Derby, but while the premier Classic is a hopeless cause, the opening handicap, off a mark of just 85, should be well within reach.

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HYPERION'S	
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HYPERION	
Draw	C M L
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SANDRINGHAM SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS B) £2,500 added 2m 4f 11yds	
Draw	C M L
1	124 124 141 121
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HYPERION	
Draw	C M L
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BRADSHAW (BROS) OPEN HUNTERS CHASE (CLASS H) £2,500 added 2m 4f 11yds	
Draw	C M L
1	124 124 141 121
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3	124 124 141 121
4	124 124 141 121
5	124 124 141 121
6	124 124 141 121
7	124 124 141 121
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COURTIS & CO HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,750 added 2m 4f 11yds	
Draw	C M L
1	124 124 141 121
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4	124 124 141 121
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7	124 124 141 121
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Doherty's joy is hard on Hendry

Guy Hodgson reports on the Irishman who deposed a snooker legend

It is a measure of the man that when he was beaten everyone assumed something was wrong with Stephen Hendry. Was he ill? Was there something on his mind? How could he perform so well, un-Hendry like?

The immediate focus was on Ken Doherty after his 18-12 win in the final of the Embassy World Championship on Monday, but Hendry's lacklustre performance formed a substantial backdrop. The champion had not lost at Sheffield's Crucible since 1991; to succumb at the last within touching distance of a record seventh title was cruel but fascinating.

The BBC do not have the verified viewing figures for the final, but their interim estimate is that eight million tuned in for the climax, confirming an upturn in interest in the game.

Like Steve Davis at his peak, people have nothing against Hendry except they want to see him beaten. As the six-times champion said sardonically: "It will be a popular result."

of him. There is little wrong with him, Ian Doyle said, but "he could sleep for Ireland". As a last resort he lambasted Doherty in the Irish press and got a reaction that was remarkable.

For four weeks Doherty stopped going home to Ireland and instead practised seven hours a day with Ronnie O'Sullivan at Lifford Snooker Club. The effect was Doherty's title — only his second ranking tournament since turning professional in 1990 — while O'Sullivan knocked in the fastest competitive maximum in history.

Up to the final, Doherty had played the best snooker at the Crucible, but beating the likes of Davis is not the same as defeating Hendry.

That was shown when the champion was 15-7 down and seemingly running out of energy. His response was to win five frames in a row and to recall memories of his fight-back from 14-8 down against Jimmy White in the 1992 final.

At 15-12, the tide was with the holder, but missing the third last red along the back cushion proved to be the high water mark. "I was shaking like a leaf," Doherty said. "I had lost a bad frame just before it and my heart dropped. I was pretty low. If he had got within two frames it could have gone either way."

Fortunately for Doherty his nerve held for a break of 17 and, having gone four ahead again he fell over the line to become the first world champion from the Republic of Ireland. "It's marvellous for my family," he said. "They were out there playing. They were rooting every ball."

For Doherty the immediate future is a trip to Dublin to join the family celebrations, and a year to balance his new found enthusiasm for work against the commercial opportunities his status will bring. Meanwhile, Hendry will spend the next 12 months toiling to dispose him.

"It's not disastrous, but it is disappointing," said Hendry, who has won five other tournaments this season. "I'd swap the world title for the other events, but I'm No 1 in the world by a country mile and that's a consolation to take away. I've had a season that many other players would die for. I'm only 28. I'm not gone yet."

Doherty fact file

1960: Born 17 September, Dublin.
1980: Became World Amateur Champion.
1990-91: Turned professional and lost to Steve Davis in first round of World Championship.
1992-93: Won first ranking tournament, the Royal Welsh Open.
1993-94: Beaten by Jimmy White in World Championship quarter-finals.
1994-95: Went out of World Championship at first hurdle.
1995-96: Won the Dr Marten's European League.
1996-97: Captained Ireland to final of World Cup, won world title.



Upwardly mobile: Andrea Congreaves, from Epsom, will play for Charlotte Sting next month

Photograph: David Ashdown

Jump up for Congreaves

Richard Taylor on the Briton hoping to succeed in the inaugural women's NBA

She was 16 and about 5ft 10in. When she dunked the ball through a 10ft-high basket during a session at Paul Simpson's Crystal Palace Basketball School, the England international knew he had found someone special.

Ten years on, Andrea Congreaves, has proved him right. Next month, the Epsom-born Congreaves, now 6ft 2in, begins her professional career in America for the Charlotte Sting in the inaugural season of the Women's National Basketball Association. She will earn over £1,000 per week for the 10-week campaign.

Simpson and Congreaves have clear memories of that night at the National Sports Centre. But Simpson and the Crystal Palace's women's coach, Mark Clark, soon realised that her talent would dwarf the English Women's League.

After playing for three English clubs between 1987 and 1989, Congreaves won all-American honours with Mercer University in Atlanta. She has

played in Italy and Spain for four years but will add to her 25 England caps in the European Championships this month.

"Paul had come to coach basketball at Carshalton High School in our lunch hours. I'd never even seen basketball then," Congreaves recalled. "I'd been playing netball, running 200 metres, throwing the javelin, doing the high jump — going for any sport I could. But basketball hooked me right from the first. It was the thrill of it, the speed, the physical side, especially compared to netball which was so static."

Simpson, 37, still England's most capped international player, said: "She was very tall, extremely athletic and incredibly talented for basketball and I persuaded her to come to Palace for more intense coaching. It was actually an under-pumped volleyball that she dunked, so she could grip it with one hand."

Dunking is beyond the reach and athleticism of all but a few women players, even in practice. Congreaves said: "We were doing a jumping drill and I kept touching the rim, which I wasn't supposed to be able to do. Then I grabbed the rim and pulled the basket down, which I definitely wasn't supposed to be able to do."

"People in the gym started calling out to 'give her a ball, give her a ball'. So I ran in and dunked it, right-handed. I landed, looked round and the whole gym had stopped. No one was moving, everyone was looking. 'But she's never tried it in a game. But too scared,' she added.

Congreaves continued, "I've always had a problem with self-confidence. I'd go along at my own pace, convinced I was developing OK, until someone convinced me otherwise." When the WNBA scouted her at Italian club Como, she assumed they were looking at two team-mates.

Clark, now assistant to Billy Mims at the Budweiser League champions, the Leopards, also coached Congreaves at Brixton. "Mark and Paul were always telling me I had the talent to go to the top. When I was only 17 Mark said: 'You know you're good enough to play in Italy,' but I'd just look at him and say, 'no, I don't know that.'"

Last season, with Como, she reached the last four of the European Super League. Clubmate Catarina Pollini has also been drafted to the eight-team WNBA, along with two other Continentals — Eva Nemcova, of the Czech Republic and Frances Isabelle Fijakowski.

Congreaves, now a veteran at the highest level of European basketball, knows what to expect next month. "This league will be like taking all the most talented players and all the most talented teams you've ever faced and playing them every single game."

"Words can't explain how I feel because I still can't believe it."

Martyn has more cause to celebrate

Rugby League
DAVE HADFIELD

Tommy Martyn, St Helens' man of the match in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup final, has two further reasons for reflecting that this has not been a bad week.

Martyn, who won the Lance Todd trophy for his outstanding display at Wembley, has been told that he has no case to answer over a suspected dangerous tackle for which he was placed on report.

Saints have also revealed that they plan to improve his contract at the club. Martyn and the Great Britain tour are among the lowest paid first-teamers at Knowsley Road and Prescott has been on the transfer list since the end of last season.

Saints have been determined to keep their wage bill within bounds that they can afford, but their chief executive, David Howes, said that the deals for both players would now be renegotiated.

The choice of a new Great Britain coach is to be delayed. Phil Larder's contract finishes at the end of this month, but the league's director of development, Joe Lydon, who will have

a big say in the 2000 appointment, wants to see how candidates fare against Australasian opposition in the World Club Championship matches, which start next month.

He said: "While it would be nice to have the coaches in place quickly so that we can get a squad together, it would be foolish not to take the opportunity of seeing how the coaches perform in the World Club Championship." Lydon said.

The Salford coach, Andy Gregory, whose side have enhanced his reputation with their form in Super League, has been regarded as the front runner for the job, which will start with a tour by Australia in October and November, but Lydon has stressed that no decisions have yet been made.

Something coming up with the end of July, with an appointment perhaps in early August," he said.

Andy Goodway, who would until recently have been seen as a contender, but who was sacked by Oldham last month, has had informal talks with the Wigan coach, Eric Hughes, about playing a part at Central Park. The Wigan chairman, Jack Robinson, said it was unlikely, however, that Goodway would be joining them.

Capriati capitulates in the first round

Tennis

Jennifer Capriati was beaten in straight sets by her fellow American Chanda Rubin in the first round of the Italian Open in Rome yesterday. Capriati, who made her European professional debut at the same event in 1990, held three set points at 5-3 and 4-0, but then fell away badly, losing 7-6, 6-2.

Capriati is now ranked 28th in her latest comeback, but her inability to capitalise on promising positions was all too apparent here. Having secured her three set points she then lost the next eight points in succession. Rubin, ranked 29th, will face the defending champion and four-times winner of the event, Conchita Martinez of Spain, in the second round.

The top eight seeds had first-round byes. One seed fell in yesterday's action, with Belgium's Dominique Van Roost beating the No 15, Nathalie Tauziat of France, 6-7, 6-1, 6-2.

Martina Hingis has pulled out of next week's German Open in Berlin, missing a possible showdown with her predecessor as No 1 in the world, Steffi Graf, the organisers said yesterday. Hingis, the 16-year-old Swiss sensation, injured her knee in a riding accident and was also forced to miss Rexona Cup in Hamburg last week and this week's Italian Open in Rome. By failing to play in Berlin, Hingis will not have any match practice before the French Open, which starts on 26 May. Graf has not played since February because of a knee injury and is hoping to make her comeback in Berlin.

Britain's Federation Cup team beat Egypt 3-0 in their second Pool A match in Europe/Africa group two in Antalya, Turkey yesterday. It was Britain's second successive 3-0 win after beating Lithuania yesterday as they again overwhelmed their opponents.

Julie Pullin beat Yasmien Abdulla 6-1, 6-1 in the opening match, which was quickly followed by British No 1 Sam Smith defeating Mawa El Wany by the same score.

The doubles pairing of Clare Wood and Lorna Woodroffe then went one better as they lost just a single game to Abdulla and El Wany, winning 6-1, 6-0. Britain, top seeds in the strong pool, have to win all five matches this week if they are to gain promotion to Europe/Africa group one, with today's opponents Estonia likely to provide stronger opposition than Lithuania or Egypt.

TODAY'S NUMBER

50,000

The pounds bet by Bedford chairman Frank Warren on his side beating Bristol in tonight's Courage League rugby union play-off, at 5-4. Warren won the same sum from Mickey Duff on Saturday after his boxer, Robin Reid, beat Duff's man, Henry Wharton.

Tyson's green light for bout with Holyfield

Boxing

Mike Tyson's doctor has given the heavyweight clearance to resume contact training in preparation for his rematch against Evander Holyfield on 28 June.

The title bout, scheduled for 3 May, was postponed when Tyson reopened a cut over his left eye sustained in his loss to Holyfield. It was the second time Tyson had postponed a fight with Holyfield, and the latest in a string of delays for the former champion. Bruised ribs forced Tyson to pull out of a date with Holyfield in 1991, and bronchitis prevented him from facing Bruce Seldon last July.

The former heavyweight champion, Riddick Bowe, and his sister were reconciled yesterday after a weekend dispute in which both reportedly suffered split lips. Bowe and his sister, Velma Mellon, said in a statement that they "remain loving and supportive of each other".

Baseball

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Kansas City 2 Boston 0; Anaheim 2 Baltimore 2; Milwaukee 9 New York Yankees 5; Toronto 5 Detroit 1; Los Angeles 11 Oakland 7. Postponed: Texas v Cleveland.

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Pittsburgh 3 Philadelphia 0; Houston 2 St Louis 1; San Francisco 10 San Diego 1; New York Mets 6 Colorado 1; Los Angeles 3 Cincinnati 1; San Francisco 4 Montreal 2.

EASTERN DIVISION

Baltimore .19 4 9 .678
New York Yankees .36 15 .516
Boston .24 13 .492
Detroit .12 15 .400
Philadelphia .12 15 .400

CENTRAL DIVISION

Minnesota .14 14 .500
Cleveland .14 14 .500
Chicago White Sox .14 14 .500
St Louis .14 14 .500
Detroit .14 14 .500

WESTERN DIVISION

Seattle .12 12 .500
San Francisco .12 12 .500
Oakland .12 12 .500
Los Angeles .12 12 .500
Colorado .12 12 .500

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Atlanta .22 8 .733
Pittsburgh .15 14 .517
Houston .15 14 .517
St Louis .15 14 .517
Philadelphia .15 14 .517

CENTRAL DIVISION

Houston .18 13 .581
Pittsburgh .18 13 .581
St Louis .18 13 .581
Cleveland .18 13 .581
Chicago White Sox .18 13 .581

WESTERN DIVISION

Colorado .20 9 .690
San Francisco .20 9 .690
Los Angeles .20 9 .690
San Diego .20 9 .690
Seattle .20 9 .690

Baseball

Nick Nurse has resigned as coach of Budweiser League club Birmingham Bulls to join Sunair Odeon of Belgium.

NBA Play-offs (best of seven): Houston 112 Seattle 102 (Houston lead series 1-0).

Cycling

DUNDEE FOUR DAYS RACE: First single (Dundee) winner 1:32.50. Second (Dundee) 1:33.50. Third (Dundee) 1:34.50. Fourth (Dundee) 1:35.50. Fifth (Dundee) 1:36.50. Sixth (Dundee) 1:37.50. Seventh (Dundee) 1:38.50. Eighth (Dundee) 1:39.50. Ninth (Dundee) 1:40.50. Tenth (Dundee) 1:41.50.

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Tiger Stransky
The Springbok view of the
Pilkington Cup final, page 24

sport

Women can jump
Richard Taylor on a Briton in
the new WNBA, page 27

League clubs must change or 'go bust'

Football

ANDREW MARTIN

Life outside the Premiership just gets harder. Yesterday National League clubs were bluntly informed that their futures could not be guaranteed unless they embraced radical plans for the wholesale overhaul of the three divisions below the elite.

The changes would see clubs currently in the Vauxhall Conference invited to join an enlarged League, split regionally at the lowest tier. Any opponents of the plan were told they risked sending the League into an abyss from which it would not return.

Strong words indeed, which came from Gerry Boon of the management consultants Deloitte Touche, commissioned in January to draft the independent report. Its findings, sent to all 72 League chairmen last week, will be debated at a special meeting, addressed by Boon, in London tomorrow.

The scale of the proposed changes is certain to provoke an outcry in some quarters, but Boon warned: "If these recommendations are not accepted I think that within a few years 20 clubs will have very serious financial problems and potentially go bust."

"There are already 20 clubs where the Inland Revenue could send in the liquidators, and more than 10 who need the

support of the Professional Footballers' Association to survive, while the vast majority are running at an operating loss."

"In simple terms, there is not a standstill option. The League either goes forwards into the future, or backwards."

The proposals are:

- The League will be "reinvigorated" by being expanded to include Vauxhall Conference clubs;
- The current First and Second Divisions will be unchanged, but the Third Division would be regionalised, with clubs run on a part-time basis allowed to join;
- Promotion and relegation issues would be extended to ensure fewer "meaningless" games;
- Play-offs for both promotion and relegation. Up to five clubs could move each way from divisions within the League;
- The Coca-Cola Cup would be given an extra two-legged first round to accommodate the increased number of League members;
- First Division and Premiership clubs would be allowed a phased entry from the third-round stage, with all ties from that point settled on the night. There would be no replays;
- A commercially qualified chief executive would be appointed to head the new-look League, with an independent chairman and commercial director;
- The organisation and ad-

ministration of the League would be located under one roof, with the traditional headquarters in Lytham St Annes abandoned and the League offices centralised in London;

- Restructuring of the League itself, to turn it from an administration-led organisation into a market-led body; and
- Ensuring the League operates as a professional representative body, acting for the long-term good of professional football and not narrowly for the sole benefit of current member clubs.

Hereford, the relegated Third Division club that would benefit from such a bold restructuring, have persuaded Graham Turner to withdraw his offer to resign. Turner, the club's director of football, had offered to stand down following Hereford's demotion to the GM Vauxhall Conference on Saturday.

One League club currently undergoing an internal review is Shrewsbury Town, who have dismissed their manager, Fred Davies, following the club's relegation to the Third Division. Davies, at 57 the League's oldest manager, steered the Gay Meadow club to the Third Division title in his first season in charge and last year took them to Wembley for the first time in the Auto Windscreens Shield. However, a decline in their 16 games - turned initial play-off hopes into relegation from Division Two.

Happier news for Mick Jones. The Plymouth caretaker manager has been given the job on a permanent basis. Jones has been in charge since Neil Warnock, now managing Oldham, was dismissed by Argyle in February.

Sheffield Wednesday confirmed that the Moroccan defender Patrick Blondeau has arrived at Hillsborough to undergo a medical. The 29-year-old French international has agreed a three-year contract and Wednesday hope to finalise a deal, believed to be worth £1.8m, providing he passes his medical. Blondeau will not be paraded as a Wednesday player until the end of the season because Monaco, the newly crowned French champions, still have two games remaining.

Paul Peschisolidi has threatened to quit West Bromwich Albion, claiming the club have reneged on a promised wage review. The Canadian striker, now on the transfer list, said he agreed to a wage cut when moving from Birmingham on condition the situation would be reviewed at the end of this season.

Billy Stark, Celtic's assistant manager, will stay at Parkhead until 18 May before stepping down.

Ravanelli still hopes to be fit for final

TOMMY STANFORTH

Bryan Robson is hopeful that Fabrizio Ravanelli will be fit to play for Middlesbrough in the FA Cup final against Chelsea on Saturday week.

The Italian international striker had a scan yesterday to establish the extent of the hamstring injury he suffered during Monday's 3-3 draw against Manchester United at Old Trafford. Robson, Middlesbrough's manager, revealed the injury was not as serious as first feared. "It's not snapped," he said. "It's not as bad as we first thought and, hopefully, we can get him fit for Wembley."

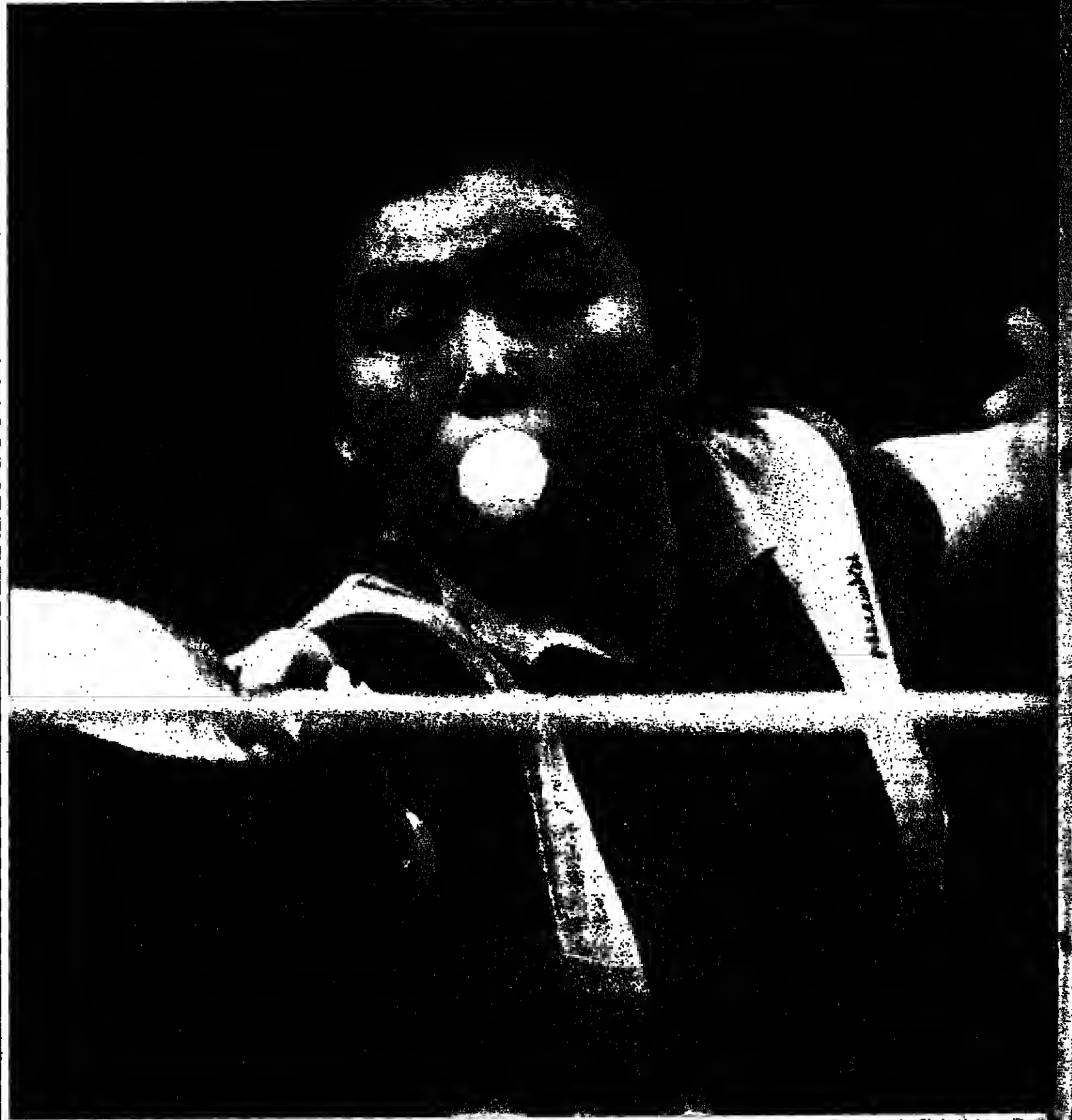
Ravanelli said: "I was worried when I went to hospital for a scan. I do not know the results of the tests, but I would put my chances of playing at Wembley as 50-50. We will have to wait and see. I will not be fit, though, for our final two Premiership matches."

Jürgen Klinsmann's return to English football is far from cer-

tain despite reports that he is set to rejoin Tottenham at the end of the season, sources close to the player said yesterday. The German international captain, who has decided to leave Bayern Munich at the end of the season because he is unhappy with the way he has been treated at the club, has had offers to play in Spain, Italy and Turkey as well as England.

Aston Villa will be forced to sell their Serbian midfielder Sasa Curcic to a foreign club if they fail to obtain a new work permit for their £4m record signing. Curcic has not been selected for the number of first-team matches required to guarantee another permit.

Liverpool's Robbie Fowler faces a Football Association misconduct charge after being sent off, along with Everton's David Unsworth, for fighting in the Merseyside derby on 16 April. Fowler appeared to lash out at Unsworth as the pair were leaving the pitch - hence the FA charge, which is likely to lead to a fine.



Deng Yaping on her way to victory over Wang Nan in the women's singles final at the World Championships

Photograph: Chris Heigren/Reuters

Waldner shines amid the chaos

Table Tennis

Jan-Ove Waldner gave the World Championships a lustre it hardly deserved yesterday with his stirring triumph over the young Belarusian Vladimir Samsonov in the men's singles final.

His achievement also banished to the background, the organisational problems that had made the tournament a night-

mare for the players and media. If only the championships had run as smoothly as Waldner's easy progression to the title. Sadly, it was chaos.

A record 116 countries playing 6,000 matches on 42 tables - the most countries, the most players, the most matches, and the largest collection of results.

The 44th championships was the biggest, but they were far from being the best.

For a start, a new system for second-round group matches in the team event was so complicated no one could understand it. It produced a scheduling nightmare with teams not knowing who and where they were playing two hours before the match.

The public were also affected. Some who had bought seats in the main G-Mex arena found them occupied by players.

Consequently, all players and officials were banned from occupying the spectators' stands and those refused included Xu Yinsheng, the Chinese president of the International Table Tennis Federation.

A players' strike was then threatened unless the ban was rescinded and the organisers were forced into a swift U-turn to allow them to occupy unserved seats.

The media suffered when computerised results systems failed to work which meant results often arrived more than two hours after the match was over - or never at all.

Even before the competition was completed, an inquiry was underway with ITTF executive vice-president, Yip Yih of Malaysia, placing some of the fault on the shoulders of his own governing body.

Cow crash puts paid to Makinen

Rallying

Carlos Sainz of Spain and the Frenchman François Delecour were in joint first place in the Tour of Corsica rally after yesterday's second day saw the hopes of the Finnish world champion, Tommi Makinen, ruined.

Sainz, in a four-wheel drive Ford Escort, and Delecour, in a lightweight two-wheel drive Peugeot 306, had exactly the same time after the day's six timed stages in changing conditions with occasional downpours.

Gilles Panizzi of France, the overnight leader, was third, nine seconds back in the second

Peugeot, while Britain's Colin McRae was fourth, a further 10 seconds behind and also still in contention for victory today.

McRae lost time in the morning because of a wrong choice of tyres but then recovered superbly, clocking the best time in four tests in his Subaru Impreza.

Makinen, who had started the day sixth, had to pull out after bumping into a cow with his Mitsubishi Lancer halfway through the day's first test, the longest of this year's rally, over 48.9 kilometres from Vero to Liamone.

Both Makinen and his co-driver, Seppo Harjanne, escaped injury, but the car was destroyed and they were unable to restart.

Yesterday's gruelling first section on twisting asphalt roads north of Ajaccio went to Sainz, who gained 46 seconds on Panizzi. Delecour was second fastest, 10 seconds slower than Sainz, while Panizzi slipped to third. "I made the wrong choice of tyres," Panizzi said.

Sainz, who was four seconds behind Delecour after Liamone, was slightly faster than the Frenchman in three of the next four stretches despite electrical problems. "The windshield wipers stopped working at one point while it was pouring and the horn blew by itself for some reason, but apart from that, everything was fine," Sainz said.

Banks returns to the basics

MATT TENCH

Tony Banks was quick to demonstrate yesterday that his appointment to high office had done nothing to dull the instincts of a true football fan. Asked what he thought of the facilities at Wembley Stadium, the new Minister for Sport replied: "Crap."

At an impromptu press conference in his new office, Banks gave every indication that he would be a Sports Minister like none of his predecessors, refusing to allow his elevation to curb his capacity for plain speaking. "We've got wonderful facilities being developed at club level, but crap facilities at national level," he said. "The facilities at Wembley are appalling. I feel ashamed to think Wembley is our national stadium and I think something has to be done about it."

Presumably by himself, though Wembley, which was confirmed as football's national stadium last December, may ask the minister to reconsider his verdict after its £210m overhaul. Work is due to begin next year, with a completion date tentatively set for 2000.

Banks succeeds John Major as the nation's most powerful Chelsea fan, and was already tending to sample Wembley's delights on Saturday week at the Cup final. As Minister of Sport he can now go every year.

Yesterday's press conference was dominated by questions about football. On the issue of a possible return to terraces, Banks said: "I don't think we can go back. I wonder what demand there is for standing areas now. I think we've moved on."

However, Banks was worried about the effects that the high cost of tickets would have on the game in the long term, expressing particular concern that

the unemployed could no longer afford to attend matches in the Premiership.

Banks also spoke yesterday about the danger of Sky becoming too dominant in the televising of football. "Sky has been great in terms of the presentation of football, for instance, but of course they can do that with a dedicated sports channel."

"The money they put into football is also great, but I'm still worried looking down the road about what might happen if more and more sport is cornered by one of the suppliers and they end up charging more and more."

Banks is committed to helping the Football Association try to secure the rights to host the 2006 World Cup in England. He cheerfully admitted to not being very clear how he would go about this, but acknowledged the strength of the German opposition. "We're going to have a bit of a fight there," he said.

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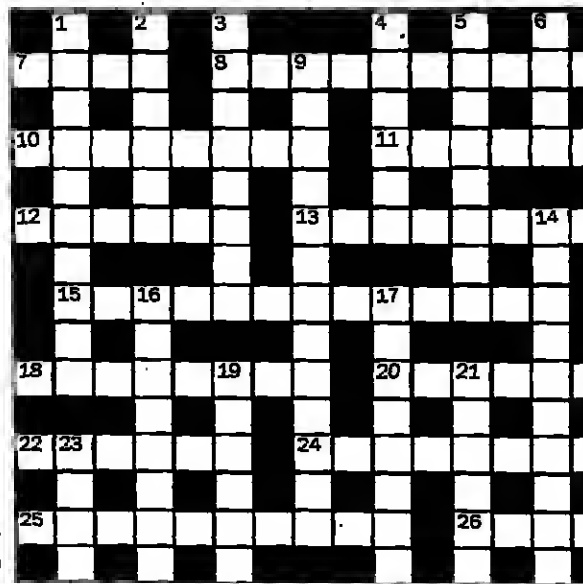
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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3292, Wednesday 7 May

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



ACROSS
7 River erosion (4)
8 Considered French composer, not having succeeded with scale ... (10)
10 ... and a painter compatriot failing to open bottom drawer (8)
11 Black Beauty for example - English horse, male (6)
12 A horse trained on dry land (6)
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18 Lorries getting punctures around base (8)
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9 Joke-shop supplies in a shocking glut, to be sorted out (8-5)
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